



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines


Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>



PITY 'TIS,
'TIS TRUE.



600060374Q



PITY 'TIS, 'TIS TRUE.

PITY 'TIS, 'TIS TRUE.

A STORY OF MONACO.

BY ZITTO.



LONDON:
REMINGTON & CO.,

134 NEW BOND STREET.

1882.

[*All Rights Reserved.*]

251. i. 612.

CONTENTS.



	PAGE
CHAPTER I.	
Sou' Monaco,	1
CHAPTER II.	
"Reflections," . . , . .	23
CHAPTER III.	
Monaco in Sunshine,	42
CHAPTER IV.	
Working for the Poor,	71
CHAPTER V.	
Wrangling and Wrestling,	96
CHAPTER VI.	
The Hills of Turbie,	115
CHAPTER VII.	
Anonymous Letters,	151
CHAPTER VIII	
White Cyclamen,	174

CHAPTER IX.

Monaco in Rain,	202
---------------------------	-----

CHAPTER X.

"My René,"	231
----------------------	-----

SEQUEL.

After Three Years,	259
------------------------------	-----

Cras Lux,	282
---------------------	-----

PITY 'TIS, 'TIS TRUE.



CHAPTER I.

S O U' M O N A C O.

WHO shall describe it? Has it not been attempted over and over again *ad nauseam*, and has any description ever resembled the reality? Has it not been compared to a whitened sepulchre? a modern Sodom and Gomorrah? and with one step from the sublime to the ridiculous, to a tiger's den, a spider's web, an impious hole, and Dante's Inferno?

Men and women of the world, who, having seen most things, have forgotten to be surprised at anything, take it as a matter of course and say nothing about it, and think less. Clergymen compare it to a moth flutter-

ing round a candle, and many other like innocent and trite similes.

Women of a certain class talk of it in a whisper, conceiving it to be indecent to mention its name *à haute voix*.

Girls, also of a certain class, weave romances, *before* they enter its painted walls, wherein they figure themselves as angels of light sent to lure lost souls from the perilous fascination of *trente et quarante* to the peaceful monotony of the marriage state. When the fair dreamers arrive they find the lost souls too much absorbed to remark them.

It is a peculiarity of this favoured spot, that after a very short sojourn therein, all our pet illusions are sure to vanish one by one, and yet they perish so easily, without any pain to speak of, life is a huge comedy, until it becomes a still more gigantic tragedy, and, in the meantime, *viva la bagatele*.

He who spends forty-eight hours at Monte Carlo, mostly loses his money; twice forty-eight, his respect for his own species; three times forty-eight, and he becomes a disciple of

Darwin ; four times forty-eight, and he has ceased to believe in honour, justice, chivalry, or humanity, and least of all does he believe in himself. *Telle est la vie*—at Monaco.

Now on the upper terrace of this enchanting but iniquitous garden stands a stately group of palms, and under the shade of these tropical trees, two benches are placed, one facing the terrace and casino, and the other the old town and harbour. By this arrangement a person sitting on one bench can perfectly well hear any conversation going on between the occupants of the other, though they are mutually hidden by the trunks of the trees, and various shrubs and climbing plants.

A strictly honourable person occupying one of these benches might think it incumbent on him to make his presence known to his neighbours on the other, if they happened to be conversing in his mother tongue and were evidently unconscious of his vicinity, but some people have one notion of honour, and some

another, and some people deliberately do evil that good may come. Even in the matter of eavesdropping, and to this latter class the lady occupying the bench facing the sea, at the moment this story opens, no doubt belonged.

Mrs. Paradise was her name, she described herself as an Anglican lay sister, and her mission was to comfort the afflicted, and convert sinners from the error of their ways to her own ideas of virtue; how she succeeded the end of this story will show. Mrs. Paradise was not precisely a lady, in the higher acceptation of the word, but in speaking of her, good-natured people were wont to say, "she is so well meaning, that one naturally overlooks any little vulgarity, you know". Now on this particular afternoon this well-meaning though vulgar person was occupied in adding up a sum in a note book of imposing appearance. It was a ghastly sum total, "seventeen death-beds, eight proselytes for certain, three doubtful, six hopelessly unrepentant". "It is a falling off this month," said Mrs. Paradise

thoughtfully, "but then I had twenty-nine in November, and one cannot expect to have one a day on an average all the year round. I am sure it is not for want of seeking them out. Perhaps here I should have a greater scope, but then they are more difficult to get at; well, if I am prayerful and resolute, 'it will come,' as that shining faced and bald headed little hypocrite said to-day when he was picking his gold on '*œur et zero*' as he called it. I would try to lead *him* to better things, but he is one of the most hopeless class of sinners, ten times more difficult to convert than a real scoffer: he is so intensely satisfied with himself; a man who goes every Sunday to church in a frock coat and lavender kid gloves, and spends the remaining six days in reckless gambling, and slandering his neighbours! Even on his death-bed, such a man as that would try to compromise with heaven: no, I must leave him to his fate. Stay, we will mention his name in our prayers! Oh! what a place it is! what a place it is!"

Now in justice to Mrs. Paradise it must be

confessed that she did not gamble, but like the bald headed little man, she certainly slandered her neighbours, only she called it by another name!

While Mrs. Paradise was thus meditating, two people slowly sauntered along the terrace until they came within a few yards of the group of palms, a tall dark man of distinguished appearance, and a girl, so young and slight that at first sight she gave one the idea of not being grown up. But on closer observation, her dress, and a certain air of quiet self-possession proclaimed her to be, precisely what she was, a very youthful married woman. "What a lovely place!" she was saying, "it surpasses anything I have ever seen before in point of beauty, but then I have not travelled much," she added.

"I thought you would admire it," answered her companion, "it always looks particularly well at this hour of the day, with that soft haze over the distant mountains."

"I think I should like to spend the rest of my life here!" said the girl enthusiastically.

"You would find the heat unpleasant in the summer; the great want of the place is shade," replied her companion prosaically.

"Have you been here often before?" inquired the girl.

"Yes, a good many times," was the smiling rejoinder.

"I am so sorry," she said, in a tone of disappointment. "I wish this had been your first visit, as well as mine, it would have made it much pleasanter."

"But, why, my Valérie? what a whimsical child you are! what possible difference can it make?"

"Oh, I can hardly explain, if you don't understand what I mean," replied Valérie, "but since you have been here so often, you can show me where Newtown is."

"It is somewhere out there," pointing vaguely with his stick, at the distant mountains beyond Bordighera.

"So far away! it would take a long time to go there!" exclaimed Valérie.

"A long time."

“Have you never been, René?”

“Not I, my dear child! what should take me to a village filled with hideous, ill-dressed women, doctors, and impecunious foreigners?” replied René impatiently.

“You do not seem to know much of the surrounding country, I must say,” remarked Valérie, laughing, “considering how often you have been here before. How did you get through the time?”

“I read the papers, and smoked a good deal, and strolled about the gardens, I knew a good many people—men—and, well—I used to punt a little,” not meeting his wife’s eye, and beginning to look defiant.

“I thought people only punted on a river,” said Valérie innocently.

“Did you, darling,” said René, laughing, but not attempting to enlighten his wife’s ignorance.

At this moment Mrs. Paradise, hearing voices, peeped between the trunks of the trees, and caught sight of the tall Englishman; but his companion was hidden from her by a thick flowering shrub.

“That man!” she exclaimed, rapidly consulting her note book. “Yes, it is the same person, the Marquis Baremo. A *joueur effréné*. I thought I had lost sight of him for ever, when the gambling places in Germany were closed, but Providence has thrown him in my way again. It is decreed that I shall lead him to better things, and what a triumph it would be! what a sweet satisfaction! the crowning success of my humble life!” said Mrs. Paradise ecstatically.

“What a kind, good man M. Blanc must be. I should like to know him!” was Valérie’s next *naïve* remark.

Her husband responded by a shout of such genuine mirth, that it caused Mrs. Paradise to peep from behind her tree again in wonder. “Aye, he is with one of those miserable creatures, but I will surmount *all* difficulties—it is decreed—otherwise we should never have met again.”

“René, why do you laugh?” said Valérie, in an aggrieved voice, “I assure you he employs regularly many hundred workmen, who

would otherwise starve, and you know he *makes* work for them, out of pure charity—is it not *nice* of him?” she said, raising her lovely innocent grey eyes to her husband’s face.

“What a child you are, my Valérie!” said René, fondly. “And such a pretty child, with your big grey eyes and nut brown hair, or golden, is it?”

“I am so glad you like me, René,” she said gently, “I don’t think I am pretty, but I am glad you do.”

“Now tell me something more about Blanc ; you are throwing a new light on this little establishment, and the great philanthropist who set it going.”

“No, you are only laughing at me,” said Valérie reproachfully, “and so I suppose it is not true about the workmen?”

“Founded on fact, like more of the stories at Monte Carlo ; however, if Blanc is not precisely a second Peabody, he is a deuced shrewd man, and thoroughly understands the weakness of human nature. Here he sits on his rock, spinning his silken web in the sunshine,

and one after another, the foolish flies flutter into it, and are wound up and devoured by the unsatiable old gourmand."

"What a horrible idea! you have quite spoilt the romance of the place; but then, René dear, if it is wrong to gamble, why do people do it?" inquired Valérie, ingenuously.

"You innocent child, just out of your Convent! *why* do people do what is wrong, you ask, knowing it to be such? Because wrong things are the pleasantest, and the knowledge that one is tasting forbidden fruit, causes a perverted mind intense satisfaction."

"Oh, René!"

"Oh, Valérie," responded her husband, mockingly. "'Tis true, 'tis pity—pity 'tis, 'tis true! It may not be long, before you realise the melancholy fact."

"Well!" said Valérie, unconvinced, "if people choose to gamble, they ought to blame themselves, and"—with mischievous emphasis—"not nice kind M. Blanc, who has made this place so pretty for the good of his fellow-creatures."

"Precisely : they display the basest ingratitude to the benefactor of the human race," said René laughing, as his wife strolled away from him, and sat down on the vacant bench under the palm trees, with her unconscious back to Mrs. Paradise, whose watery blue eyes were scanning her through the shrubs.

René, in the meantime, walked restlessly backwards and forwards from one end of the terrace to the other. He was saying to himself, "If I had a grain of prudence, I should leave this infernal place, and never allow my little wife to suspect what a madman she has married. She is worth the sacrifice, heaven knows, if sacrifice it be, to pull up before I am an absolute beggar—but, by Jove, the temptation is too strong for me. I absolutely thirst for a punt. What a fool I am ! Well, I will only risk five hundred pounds, and then, if I lose, I will never put down a piece again. What a confounded idiot I am, to be sure ! but it is simply impossible that my cursed ill-luck can last for ever, I must have a turn sooner or later !" With this comforting reflec-

tion, René stretched himself on the bench by his wife's side.

"Valérie," he began abruptly, "do you know what I am thinking of doing?"

"No, dear René," answered his wife, opening her grey eyes wide like a child expecting to be told a story.

Mrs. Paradise also stretched out her neck, from her side of the trees, and prepared herself with the same eagerness to listen.

"I am going to buy one of those white Villas amongst the olive groves above the Casino ; don't you remember were marked how pretty they looked from the old town this morning?"

"Oh, René, how delightful ! do you really mean it?" said his wife eagerly.

"Certainly, and then we shall have a *pied-à-terre*, where we can come every winter for a few months, instead of living at these expensive hotels. It will be infinitely more economical in the end."

"Of course," agreed Valérie, "and so much pleasanter."

("Simpleton!" said Mrs. Paradise behind the trees, "can she be his wife, I wonder, *pied-à-terre*, *pied-à-fiddlestick*!")

"Will it cost much to buy?" asked Valérie, after a moment's silence.

"A mere trifle," said René, "because I mean to win the money."

Mrs. Paradise absolutely bounded on her bench.

"To win it?" echoed Valérie with just a shade of disappointment in her voice.

("Wrestle with him, wrestle with him, young woman!" groaned Mrs. Paradise under her breath, "now is your time! now or never.")

"Certainly," answered René, crossly, detecting the disappointment.

"I should not feel justified in committing such a piece of extravagance otherwise: but I do not mean to win more than £500, and with this capital, and playing steadily every day, I could easily win, say £4000 before the end of the season, *easily*," with strong emphasis.

"And if you lost?" suggested his wife with strong common sense.

"Absurd!" exclaimed René, impatiently, "it is simply impossible, playing the game I have in my head. Of course, as I only want to win a certain sum, I need not plunge, which is what invariably causes we —— people to lose."

"Perhaps it might answer," said Valérie timidly, understanding that her husband expected her to say something.

("Those are the women who lose mens' souls!" said Mrs. Paradise, behind her tree. "I long to slap her or to shake her, in a Christian spirit, of course, for her good and his, and rouse her to a sense of her own idiocy," and the energetic lady clenched her bony fist, and shook it in fierce pantomime behind Valérie's back.)

"It is a dead certainty," said René in high glee at having met with so little opposition; "and one of these days we will come over by an early train and look about for a likely villa, or at least choose a site, where, if I win more than I expect, we might build a comfortable chalet, large enough for ourselves and an occasional visitor."

("I will not listen to such blasphemous folly any longer," exclaimed Mrs. Paradise in a fierce whisper—in moments of strong excitement this worthy old lady was apt to use strong expressions, and not always to the point.)

"It will be delightful, René!" said Valérie, enthusiastically, "how soon do you think you will have won enough money to begin?"

"*Chi va piano*," quoted René gaily, feeling as if he was a boy of twenty again, "I mean to be prudent, and play a waiting game; all my theories on the subject have been wrong hitherto!"

"Have they, dear? it must be very difficult to play well, I am sure," said Valérie, sympathetically.

"But this time," he continued, "I fancy I shall have unprecedented luck, and I suspect I shall owe it to you; for when you were in the rooms this morning, I put down a few louis, *pour passer le temps*, and I won every time, but the moment you left me I began to lose; you bring me luck, my little wife."

("Little fool;" spitefully behind the tree,

“so she *is* his wife, and it is decreed that I am to convert them *both*. Oh ! if they would only both fall ill together it would be easy enough. Could one ask for it in one’s prayers, I wonder ?”)

“Dear René !” exclaimed Valérie, her eyes sparkling with pride, at this high praise. “I will *always* stay in the rooms when you play, if you think it makes the smallest difference.”

“So you shall, darling,” said René fondly, taking her little grey gloved hand and touching it with his lips. “When shall you begin to play ?” said Valérie after a moment’s silence.

“In a few days,” said René solemnly, “when I have pulled myself together a little, and fixed the most convenient hour. It is always better to begin to play exactly at the same moment every day ; there is a good deal in those little things, recollect.”

“Is there ?” said Valérie, with equal solemnity and in perfect good faith.

(“Why does not the earth open and swallow

them up, ere yet their sins are greater?" said Mrs. Paradise in anguish behind her palm. "The ways of the Lord are inscrutable;" then recollecting that if they were swallowed up she would share the same fate, she murmured, "the time is not ripe—for why should the innocent perish with the guilty?")

"I think I feel in good form at this moment," said René insinuatingly. "I have a good mind to go and get my hand in a little, it is so long since—I mean in preparation for real business a few days hence. I am tired of admiring Blanc's Paradise; will you stay here, or come with me?"

"I will come and watch you play," said his wife cheerfully and rising to go.

"You are sure you don't dislike it?" said René remorsefully, "wise women get so—so bored at watching the play, and make such a fuss when their husbands gamble."

"Dear René, why should you deprive yourself of such a trifling amusement? We have plenty of money, it might be different if we were poor."

"What a good child you are, darling, I don't know what I should have done if I had married a shrew, who stormed at me, and opposed me from morning till night. What a devil of a life we should have led."

"Perhaps I shall develop into one some day, so don't be too sure that you have married an angel," said Valérie gaily, as they ran up the steps to the Casino.

.
As soon as they were out of sight, Mrs. Paradise emerged from her retreat.

"Two more souls going to their doom. I was guided to that seat for their ultimate good. She is a fool, and does not see her danger. He is what he always has been, a *joueur effréné*; but there was some story about him—some early love affair. I am beginning to see my way. They must be snatched from the burning—one, if not both. The end justifies the means. I have never yet been baffled in carrying out a scheme for the good of my fellow creatures: and, in this case,

I have had proofs enough that I am the humble instrument, in whose hands the work is placed."

.
The result of "getting his hand in" at the tables must have been perfectly satisfactory to René, for when, a few hours later, he was taking his own and his wife's tickets at the Monte Carlo Station, he remarked to a fair, good-humoured looking Englishman, who was waiting for his turn to come,

"I won nine times running, backing the simple chances, and after that the red came up seven times, then three intermittences, and then a sum of seventeen. If I had been playing high, I might have won a fortune. I never saw such an *écart*—and poor A. was persistently backing the black all through. I am afraid, he lost a lot of money; he is such an obstinate fellow, and will always play against the game."

"My system burst up, but then I always expected it would, it never answers after the third day," said the Englishman, with a

mournful shake of his head. "However, I am glad you won, Baremo, you used to have such awful bad luck in the old Homburg days."

"Give up your systems, and go in for a heavy stake," said René, good-naturedly; "there is nothing more dangerous than those confounded systems, they run away with so much money without you knowing it."

"I am perfectly aware of it, and I would gladly do so, for I am heartily sick of them, they are so abominably treacherous, but then they *sound* so harmless, and as if there might be something steady in them, don't you know."

"No, I'll be hanged if I do," said René, laughing, "what does it signify if they *sound* harmless, when you know perfectly well they are not?"

"Well, the fact is, I daren't; but you are not required to say anything about it to the other fellows. I don't exactly mind the chaff, but it is a bore."

"You daren't!" echoed René in surprise.

"I'm afraid of my wife!" said the Englishman curtly.

“By jove!” exclaimed René, thoughtfully, as he turned away. “I wonder if the time will ever come, when I shall be afraid of *my* wife.”

CHAPTER II.

"REFLECTIONS."

MISS Dorothy Greville had been at N—— about a month, when she received the following letters :—

ELLERSLEY VICARAGE,

November 30th, 187—.

"MY DEAR DOROTHY,

"I am sorry to tell you, that our departure from England is put off for another six weeks, at least, in consequence of certain improvements George wishes to make in the School-house. So there is an end of the Villa you were to take for us, and of all our charming places for the winter. When we *do* come, we shall go to an hotel, which I detest, besides being so bad for a delicate

child like Hilda, and—well it is no use grumbling! You know how sadly disappointed I am, without my telling you. George says, it is one of those minor trials which must be borne philosophically. So easy to talk, isn't it ?

“ Your affectionate cousin,

“ MARGARET SCOTE.”

“ For self-conceit and pig-headedness—yes, that is the exact word, pig-headedness—commend me to my god-son and probable heir, the Honourable and Reverend George Scote,” exclaimed Miss Dorothy Greville to the empty room. “ So like his want of consideration, first to decoy an old woman into taking a long journey, and then, for the sake of some fiddle-faddle he has taken into his obstinate head, to throw her over at the last moment. Ah !” thought the old lady, “ if I had only known a little more about his disposition, I would *not* have consented to be his god-mother, but, dear, dear, how can one be expected to know how a baby will turn out ? or again, how could one

have forseen that the fact of being his god-mother would have brought about his marriage with my pretty cousin Margaret, and thus, by a long chain of events, have made him indirectly my heir? well-a-day, we live in a wonderful world! And when they asked me to be his god-mother Margaret was not born, and I was a happy young woman, and had five brothers and one sister older than myself, and now I am an old woman and very much alone in the world, and I have no doubt George Scote is longing for my death, if the truth was known; but in the meantime, my 'large fortune,' which, by the way, is grossly exaggerated, covers a multitude of sins, and enables me to speak my mind pretty freely, and that is precisely what I make a point of doing, and people *like* me for it, because it is 'so original'. I wonder if paupers are ever liked for the same reason by their friends? Dear, dear, how many hypocrites we find walking up and down the world, and what a great deal of unnecessary trouble they give themselves. Still, it must be confessed in all honesty that money is by no means to be des-

pised, considering that, in the short space of six months, its mere possession has metamorphosed a 'dull, cross, narrow-minded old spinster'—I speak in inverted commas—into a 'brilliant, original, kind-hearted lady,' whose acquaintance 'every one is anxious to make' . . . Dear, dear, and all this time I am growing more and more angry at the meanness of my fellow-mortals, instead of regarding them as a curious study in Natural History.

"A toad is a loathsome reptile without doubt, but it would be an act of insanity to fly into a passion with it because it is a toad; and, in like manner, human toads—or toadies, as it is the fashion to call them, are after all only true to their instincts.

"And here I am, losing my time and my temper because I cannot set the world to rights, and annihilate the genus toad, instead of attending to my correspondence like a sensible woman."

"SAN REMO, *December 1.*

"MY DEAR MISS GREVILLE,

"I hear you are staying in the same

hotel with some cousins of mine, and have made their acquaintance. I allude to the Baremos. They—or, at least, René has known you by hearsay from childhood. I used so often to tell him, when he was a boy, of that delightful expedition we all made together many years ago to L'Aure St Etienne on the Saquenay. How many years ago I hardly dare to think! René and Valérie Baremo have been married about a year. His mother was my father's only sister, and she married the Marchese Baremo, an Italian noble of good family, but with a very moderate fortune. He died under very melancholy circumstances when René was a child, and my aunt returned to England imbued with such a deep-rooted aversion to her husband's country that, during her life, she never would allow her son to re-visit it. When René was about twenty his mother died; and, as you know, he is a thorough Englishman in everything but appearance. He married Valérie de Mirecourt last year. She has a large *dot*, and, being an only child, will, at her mother's death, inherit a considerable fortune, but this is the least of her

attractions, as I am sure you will acknowledge ; though had Valérie been portionless they could not have married, for René's means are small, and he is extravagant. And now, woman-like, I have put off until the end of my letter the most important part of the whole, my real reason for writing, in fact. I hear that René is playing high at the Clubs and at Monaco. He has always been fond of play, from a mere boy, and his poor mother, dreading it, did all in her power to discourage this unlucky taste, but with no success. René, like his father, has a violent impetuous temper, which will not brook the smallest opposition, therefore there is no use in concealing a fact well known to many people—his father died by his own hand after heavy losses at play. You can, therefore, understand my Aunt's anxiety and terror when she realised that her son had inherited his father's love of gambling, combined with the same impetuous nature. René is amiable *au fond* and passionately attached to his wife, but Valérie may become alarmed, and act injudiciously ; she is only eighteen, and innocent as an angel, and it

is not at all improbable that she may look upon gambling as a great sin, and, with the best intentions, thwart and vex her husband and drive him into recklessness. Pray befriend Valérie if the occasion for doing so should ever offer itself, and do not let her fall under the influence of a certain Mrs. Paradise, who never loses an opportunity of doing evil that good may come. A highly estimable lady, no doubt, but one whose ideas on the subject of 'good works' are extremely original, and apt to outrun the limits of good breeding. Valérie would be polite, even to a burglar, I am convinced; for she can never harden her heart against any living creature. She would fall an easy victim to Mrs. Paradise, whose two hobbies at present are nursing sick people and *reforming gamblers*.

"Excuse the length of my letter, and keep an eye on Mrs. Paradise, who loves sick people, especially if they 'belong to the aristocracy,' as I once heard her say; so she will worship you.

"Believe me,

"Affectionately yours,

"ALICE HETHERINGTON."

Miss Dorothy Greville read Mrs. Hetherington's letter twice through from beginning to end, and then, laying it down on the table, with a gesture of impatience drew her desk towards her, and, choosing the smallest sheet of paper she could find, proceeded to indite the following reply.

"HOTEL ———

"N.

"MY DEAR ALICE,

"I like your cousins extremely, and we are very good friends at present, but were I to meddle in their affairs we should not continue on the same easy terms—which would cause me much annoyance. I have not the pleasure of knowing Mrs. Paradise, but she must be a bold woman to undertake to reform such a big, fierce-looking brigand as the Marchese Baremo. My dear, he can defend himself and his wife too, against even a female Jesuit such as, from your description, I take Mrs Paradise to be.

"Always and ever,

"Yours sincerely,

"DOROTHY GREVILLE."

Having sealed and directed her letter, Miss Greville rang the bell for her maid. Once, twice, three times the summons was repeated, and no maid appeared.

"It is the most extraordinary thing I ever knew!" exclaimed Miss Greville, "*The* most extraordinary thing, for until the last week Parker has always been so attentive and careful to answer the bell immediately"

At that moment the culprit appeared, very red, very much embarrassed, but with an indefinable air of resolution in her bearing which her keen-eyed mistress did not fail to remark.

"Where have you been, Parker. Don't the servants call you when my bell rings?" inquired Miss Greville.

"I beg your pardon, Ma'am, if I have kept you waiting, but I was at prayers, at Reflections, I should say," answered Parker with a look of conscious pride in the word.

"At what?" asked Miss Greville in a surprised voice.

"At Reflections," repeated Parker, her thick

red lips extending into a broad smile, and disclosing a set of very large even teeth, which gave her the expression of a good humoured horse.

“And what is that?” inquired Miss Greville, looking still more perplexed, though she was well accustomed to the eccentricities of her maid’s English.

“It is prayers, Ma’am, but in silence.”

“But where? In what church, I mean?”

“Not in a church, Ma’am; it is a lady in the hotel who has prayers three times a day in her own room, and she allows any one to come who likes; the more the better, and she exhorts us, and lends us books about religion, which she writes herself, beautiful books, Ma’am, and she is teaching us all High Church, Ma’am, if you have no objection, though indeed if you have I cannot give up my religion which is the only true one, the lady says, though I cannot but say it would be a heavy trial to me to leave you and my situation where I am so comfortable and have my meals so regular and everything.” And Mrs. Parker stopped quite out of breath.

While this torrent of words flowed from her maid's lips, Miss Greville preserved an amazed but unbroken silence. When Parker had quite finished, she exclaimed, "I never heard you say so much at a time since you have been in my service, Parker; indeed, I was beginning to hope that, unlike the generality of ladies' maids, you were a woman of few words. However, set your mind at rest, I have not the slightest inclination to interfere with your new religion if it makes you happier than the old one did. If I remember right, you were a Methodist when I first engaged you?"

"A Non-conformist, Ma'am," amended Parker grimly.

"Just so; then you became?"

"Evangicle, Ma'am," said Parker proudly.

"Ah, and now?"

"High Church, Ma'am."

"Indeed, and what do you mean by Reflections," inquired Miss Greville; "are you sure it is the right word?"

"It is something like it anyhow, Ma'am,

and that is what the other maids calls it, who have been learning the High Church for ever so long, and their ladies are of the same persuasion too, which is mostly the case, they say, with those related to the aristocracy. Titled ladies and gentlemen won't have nothing to do with the Low Church."

"Ah, and what do you mean by Reflections?" inquired Miss Greville with an ominous twinkle in her small keen eyes. "And who invented this new form of worship, for I don't remember having heard of it before?"

Parker's evident pride and pleasure at this confession was almost too much for even Miss Greville's gravity, but the maid was far too eager to impart her newly acquired knowledge to her mistress to scan her features very narrowly.

"Well, ma'am, at Reflections, we all go into the lady's room with our heads bent forward, so, ma'm," and here Parker illustrated the attitude described, for the benefit of her astonished listener, "and one's arms folded crosswise, so, ma'am, and the room is very

dark—and right in front of us is placed a black Cross, and to this we make our reverence, ladies as well as servants. Then the good lady who writes the books, exhorts us for a few minutes, and we all stand in silence, and those who likes prays to themselves ; after a short time, the lady says something like this. ‘Dear friends and fellow labourers, you are requested to offer up prayers for the deliverance of our erring brother or sister’—here follows the name—‘from the power of the devil, into whose snares her evil conduct and hardness of heart have delivered her ;’ and if it is a gentleman, the lady speaks less severe, but I cannot remember the words, for sometimes we pray for more than a dozen people. Two of them live in this hotel, a lady and gentleman of high rank, but dreadful, wicked people, Monaco gamblers, and the lady quite fast, and ——”

“Stop,” exclaimed Miss Greville indignantly.
“Do you mean to tell me that the actual names are mentioned ?”

“Certainly, ma’am, but perhaps I ought not

to have said anything about it, though I am sure I was not told to keep it secret ; but the lady says the same names are sent to each member of the Community in all parts of the world, and therefore the same people are being prayed for by the whole Sisterhood at twelve o'clock punctual, though on account of the *table d'hôte* not being over it is generally nearer half-past ; but, as the lady says, our intentions is good, and we can but do our best. Well, ma'am, then we all bend three times before the Cross, and the Reflections is over."

There was a long silence. Parker busied herself about certain little arrangements in the room, glancing nervously from time to time at her mistress, who appeared to be lost in thought.

"Parker, come here if you please," exclaimed Miss Greville, as the maid was about to leave the room. "I wish to tell you that I am ashamed of you."

"Yes, ma'am," replied the maid sullenly.

"Do you understand for what reason ?"

"Because I'm High Church, I suppose, ma'am," began Parker in an injured voice.

"Nothing of the sort," interrupted Miss Greville. "You don't even know what High Church means. If I were to ask you to explain the meaning of the words, you would be unable to do so. No, I am ashamed of you because you allow yourself to be led away by the mummeries of a community of silly mischievous women, who do their utmost to draw down contempt and ridicule upon religion, and the just indignation of all sensible people upon themselves; and I am still more ashamed of you, because you think, in your miserable self-conceit, that you can offer up prayers for the deliverance of other people, who, for all you know, are infinitely less guilty in the sight of the Almighty than you are yourself."

"Well, ma'am, yes; of course the best of us all does wrong sometimes," said Parker, smiling good temperedly, as if she was describing the naughtiness of a small child. "We are all sinners, but not such miserable ones as some of the people we pray for. They are

sinner, indeed, if you could only know what they do, ma'am, as well as Mrs. Paradise does."

Miss Greville was on the point of administering a very sharp rebuke to Parker, when the name of Mrs. Paradise caused her to pause.

"Is Mrs. Paradise the name of the lady who has these—these prayer meetings in her room?"

"Yes, ma'am, and her Christian name is Eden. Is it not beautiful, ma'am? so heavenly! it makes one feel religious even to say it; and she is such a holy minded lady, ma'am, she attended twenty-nine death-beds last month, she tries to go to one a-day."

"Merciful heaven, what a terrible woman she must be!" muttered Miss Greville. "I had no idea she was so bad as that! Perhaps Alice Hetherington is right after all. The Marchese Baremo cannot be so formidable as twenty-nine death-beds in a month—if the woman has courage enough for one thing she will have it for another."

"Did this lady nurse in a hospital, Parker?"

Was that when she attended so many death-beds ? ”

“ No, nothing of the sort, ma'am, they were ladies and gentlemen in the different hotels and pensions here and at M——. They were worthy people who had no relations, single ladies and gentlemen who come from all parts of the world for the benefit of their health ; but instead of getting better many of them die, and the good lady hears of them and goes to pray with them, and many a soul she has snatched from the burning, I have no manner of doubt.”

Miss Greville made no reply. Parker was unconsciously unfolding an entirely new phase of life to her mistress, and encouraged by the silence she continued—“ The good lady makes the people pray in spite of themselves, and very often, just at the last, they turn to her and say, ‘ Do not speak any more, you have quite convinced me ’ ; but some of them are so obstinate-like in their sins, that though she talks up to the last moment, they take no more notice of her than if she was a stone.”

“Oh, poor dying people, how very terrible to be exposed to such intrusion with no one to protect them,” groaned Miss Greville, who, in spite of her sharp tongue, was endowed with a very soft womanly heart.

“Yes, ma’am, to think how hardened people can be, even on the edge of the grave, so to speak.”

“Hush! hush! my good woman, you don’t know what you are talking about!” exclaimed Miss Greville. “Your head is filled with all this so-called religion, which is no more like the religion you are taught in your Bible than dross is like gold. Go and say your prayers in some quiet church, and pray as the publican did, that your own sins may be forgiven, and leave other people to pray for themselves, and until you have come to your senses never mention the subject to me again.”

So saying, Miss Dorothy Greville retired into the saloon, leaving Parker crestfallen, but defiant.

“It is easy to see that *she* does not belong to the aristocracy, she is Low Church all over,

a poor paltry creature!" exclaimed the indignant waiting woman. "But I am glad she did not dismiss me, as I expected she would have done at one time, for what with the high wages she gives me, and her wardrobe, and knowing no more than a child how to look after her money, I make a good thing of it at the end of the year. It is very genteel to be High Church, and to suffer for one's opinions, but it is another thing to give up one's pickings and lose one's situation, and I likes to combiné the two."

CHAPTER III.

MONACO IN SUNSHINE.

A FINE bright morning in January, warm and genial as a June day in England. A sky of clearest darkest blue, with the soft haze of early morning lingering tenderly over land and sea. Groves of dark green orange trees and cold grey olive woods stretching far away to the west, and above this fairest hill side, reminding one of a vast garden, the Dog's Head towers, bleak, and bare, and rugged, thrown out in strong relief by the clearness of the sky. To the east, a coast winding in and out in bays, and rugged cliffs, and green headlands, ending in a soft mist of purple-tinged mountains and bluest sea; while gleaming white in the far distance, nestling under sheltering hills, stands the little town of Bordig-

•

hera, upon which the sun always seems to shine, even when other places are in shadow.

Dear little town, fair as a dream when far away, but alas ! like many another lovely town in Italy, losing much of its enchantment when seen anear.

And this was the opinion of the Marches and Marchese Baremo, who, with Miss Dorothy Greville, were spending a week at Monte Carlo. A friend had lent them her villa during her own absence, and they were, for the twentieth time since their arrival, admiring the beautiful view from the terrace in front of the house. It was Madame Baremo's eighteenth birthday, and her husband had presented her with a costly bracelet, the value of which was considerably enhanced—in his eyes at least—by the fact that he had “won it” at the tables.

“It is such a good omen,” he said gleefully, as he clasped his offering on his wife's arm. “There is nothing like beginning well,” for M. Baremo had not as yet “begun in earnest” to win the necessary funds for the purchase of a *pied-à-terre* at Monte Carlo, where in the

winters to come they would be able to practise economy.

On this auspicious morning René had promised his wife that she should be allowed to "try her luck" at the tables.

It was a great concession on his part, because as he "understood the game," he naturally liked to do all the gambling himself! This was no mere child's play, but sober, serious, earnest *business*, in fact, where the utmost caution and prudent calculations were necessary, and every louis of consequence.

A gambler *par excellence* is as much in earnest as the tradesman who works early and late to accumulate the precious coins which are destined to raise his offspring a shade higher than himself in the social scale. A noble ambition, no doubt, where the end justifies the means, and he toils, and slaves, and cheats, all in the way of business, and at length reaps his reward in possessing unlimited wealth, highly educated children who despise him secretly, and the inestimable blessing of a quiet conscience, for has he not done his duty

in that state of life, *et cetera* ? In like manner the gambler toils early and late for the good of his children also. He considers himself the most unselfish and praiseworthy individual, for his schemes are always for the good of others. He is not, unfortunately, permitted to cheat, though his inclinations may tend in that direction ; and he is to the full as industrious and self-denying as the merchant, and perforce far honester, only, as a rule, he never arrives at the summit of *his* ambition—a comfortable home for his dear wife, and a competency for his beloved children, though for himself, like the merchant, he asks for nothing but the reward of a good conscience.

Well, the odds were against him, and he complains that honesty, whether spontaneous or obligatory, is not always the best policy in this world. But then we all know what sort of principles gamblers have !

However, in spite of the general depravity of the outside world, and the inhabitants of Monte Carlo in particular, the gay trio sitting on the terrace of the fair Villa Hortense on

this fine January morning were evidently at peace with themselves and their fellow creatures.

Miss Dorothy Greville admired the surrounding scenery, and listened to her companions' animated conversation with the calm indulgence of middle age.

"Let people be happy while they can, trouble will come soon enough to every one," she was wont to affirm, with much truth but no originality. Miss Greville had had a great deal of sorrow in her time, and though this had imparted a certain sharpness to her tongue, it had in the end given her wider views of life, and an immense compassion for the sorrows of others. She had a great many friends, and a vast number of enemies, for she was quick to detect insincerity, and apt to betray to the offender that she had done so, and worst of all, she possessed one virtue which in the eyes of man, or at least of womankind, was beyond pardon—that most excellent virtue which thinketh no evil, and rejoiceth not in iniquity.

To give alms liberally, and above all to

lament both long and loudly the shortcomings of one's friends, is naturally the bounden duty of a nineteenth century Christian, but not to allude to their peccadilloes, not to appear to be aware that they exist even, is simply reprehensible—a wrong, a wilfully wrong interpretation of the Bible, and a personal insult to respectable society. “*Mal dire de son prochain ! c'est une vraie fête,*” thus a French writer describes this peculiar form of religion so dear to the feminine heart ; and as Miss Greville not only refrained from saying bad things of her neighbours, but even denied that there was anything to say, her enemies agreed amongst themselves that she had done something “very wicked” in her youth, the recollection of which hung over her head like the traditional sword, and caused her to affect this unnatural indulgence for the faults of others.

But in this supposition Miss Greville's enemies were wrong. Her life had been a perfectly blameless one, but sorrow and injustice had taught her many a hard lesson,

and at the same time gave her a clearer insight than usually falls to the lot of a woman, into the cruelty, malice and selfishness which govern the actions of the greater part of humanity. Often when one rude awakening followed another she would exclaim, "Is there any truth, any honesty, any sincerity amongst civilised men and women under the sun?"

"Les belles âmes arrivent difficilement à croire au mal, à l'ingratitude; il leur faut de rudes leçons avant de reconnaître l'étendue de la corruption humaine; puis, quand leur éducation en ce genre est faite, elles s'élèvent à une indulgence qui est le dernier degré du mépris."

And by degrees Miss Greville, half unconsciously perhaps, arrived at this phase of mind. She no longer grieved when her kindness was rewarded by ingratitude, her friendship by deceit. She expected it, and was in no way surprised, but she possessed to an unusual degree the gift of reticence, and whatever opinions she might entertain in regard to her fellow mortals she kept them to herself, and

never imagined evil of anyone unless this evil was evident to the whole world. Hence her want of popularity.

When Mrs. Hetherington wrote and asked Miss Greville to befriend Madame Baremo, should she ever be placed in an exceptional position, she was perfectly aware that her request would draw forth a rebuke from Miss Dorothy Greville, whose dislike to meddling in the affairs of other people was well known, but she also felt convinced that from that time forth her young cousin would find a friend in the warm-hearted old lady, and one whose advice might be of immense service to the inexperienced girl.

It was the recollection of that letter which determined Miss Greville to accept the invitation of the Baremos to spend a week with them at Monaco: she admired the place, but disliked the company, and with the forgetfulness of self, which was one of her many charms, she reflected that if the society was bad for herself, how much worse must it be for a young and

pretty woman like the Marquise, who was also extremely impulsive and not very wise.

So with many secret misgivings Miss Greville became the guest of Monsieur and Madame Baremo in the pretty villa overlooking the sea, and consoled herself for other drawbacks by the marvellous beauty of the scenery.

She was listening uneasily, though half-amused, to the dialogue between the husband and wife, with the inward conviction that Valérie was still in mind little more than a child. "René," she was saying, "I want to play a louis *en plein*."

"No," said M. Baremo, "you must play in silver on the simple chances."

"Then I won't play at all, and it is so hard when you promised that I should try just once on my birthday," pleaded his wife in rather an injured tone.

"Well then, in silver on the dozens."

"No, no, in gold, please, dear René," said Valérie imploringly. "A louis *en plein* on eighteen, on thirty, and twenty-seven—my age, yours, and the day of the month."

"And if you lose you will only have two louis left, and you will want more, and I don't wish you to acquire a taste for gambling," said René. "Besides, it is absurd to waste money recklessly where you know of how much consequence every louis is now, when I am going to play in real earnest with an object in view."

"Waste!" exclaimed Valérie. "Why, I shall *win*, of course! I went only yesterday to a shop and chose half-a-dozen different things which I should not otherwise have thought of buying, simply because I felt so sure of winning to-day."

"I trust you did not confide your hopes to the shopman," answered M. Baremo laughing.

"Oh, René, dear boy, one louis *en plein*," pleaded Valérie.

"Well, I suppose you must have your own way on your own birthday, but you will be sure to lose," replied M. Baremo re-assuringly.

When this important point was amicably settled the small party broke up, and went their different ways, promising to meet again

at three o'clock to see the one louis played *en plein*.

Why do I, the writer of this story, always remember Monte Carlo as it looked on that sunshiny day? I had spent many weeks there before, and one day since, but when my thoughts wander back to the past, and dwell upon the many lovely spots I have visited in the course of my long life, Monte Carlo, as it appeared that day, stands out bright and clear—one of the loveliest places on earth, and one of the saddest. At three o'clock Miss Greville, with the characteristic punctuality of an old maid, joined her host and hostess on the broad Lower Terrace where they were talking and laughing with several of René's friends, who all, old and young, assured each other that they were "utterly broke," "hovering on the brink of ruin," and were each and all "absolutely without one sou". When Miss Greville heard these harrowing revelations her tender heart was torn with pity; she could scarcely conceal her deep felt sympathy, and longed to present each victim with a sufficient

sum to save him from absolute starvation, and insure him shelter for the night.

Great, therefore, was her amazement when, half-an-hour afterwards, these unhappy ruined people re-appeared at the tables with rolls of bank notes, and handfuls of gold, and faces beaming with renewed hope, announcing cheerfully to their astonished listeners that they had every intention of retrieving their former losses, that they meant to "pull themselves together," win a few thousand francs to the good, and return to their respective countries by the express train the next morning. Whether these sanguine expectations were realised, Miss Dorothy Greville had no means of discovering, fearing with unusual feminine delicacy to pry into her neighbours' affairs, but most assuredly, if fortune favour them, their successes are emblazoned in letters of gold in the Chronicles of the Books of Monte Carlo.

When an illustrious foreigner happens to win two or three hundred thousand francs from the Enemy of the Human Race, his exploit is extolled throughout the civilised world.

One would really imagine from the pride and pleasure manifested by the Enemy's servants that the whole object of the Trap was to provide Princes with pocket money ! but when an unfortunate bourgeois loses the savings of years in one fell swoop, and overtaken by grim despair goes to the nearest tree and hangs himself, the Enemy's hirelings watch their opportunity and deposit in his pockets (a loan to the dead which is usually refused to the living) a few bank notes, and a conspicuous gold watch and chain—this done, they call loudly to their friends and neighbours to come to their assistance, for lo ! they have found a man who has hanged himself.

“Another of the enemy's victims,” growls the multitude. “He has lost all his money, of course, poor devil, at those cursed tables !”

“Not at all, my good people ! behold this glittering gold chain ! ah, and a solid gold watch ! ah, a thousand thunders, and bank notes ! He did not want money. No, it was a love affair, without doubt.”

“A woman,” growls the multitude. “It is

very likely to be the case, for has not a woman been at the bottom of every crime and every misfortune since the beginning of time ? ” and the multitude leaving the dead man—slowly, like a flock of sheep returning to their fold, wends its way back again to the Trap, whose yawning mouth is open—ever open like the gates of another hell.

And a near relative of the Enemy, sitting on a bench, clothed in finest raiment, laughs gaily as she watches the procession file up the marble steps, and hums to her young daughter the refrain of a song composed during the Franco-German war, and sung by the recruits when they went to their doom, “*Marchous comme les montons-ton-ton ton ! à la Boucherie !*” Not a very refined song to come from a lady’s lips ; but then the Enemy’s relative is not what would be called a refined lady. “A few hundred thousand francs more to be added to your *dot*, my dear !” laughed her mother, but her young daughter had learned to see that dot in its right light, and she turned away and shuddered.

And so a procession was organised to see Madame Baremo "punt," as she expressed it, in her pretty foreign accent, one louis *en plein*. Valérie no longer imagined that it was only possible to punt on a river.

"Put it on the day of the month," suggested one adviser, as they came up to the first roulette table.

"Or on the day you were born," suggested an uninitiated acquaintance who was not aware that Madame Baremo's birthday was being celebrated.

"The first four always comes up when I am at the tables," plaintively suggested a young Roman, who invariably played on the last six, and was supposed to lose a small fortune every time he went to Monte Carlo.

"Where is it to go?" inquired René, upon whom devolved the important task of playing Valérie's money.

"On eighteen," she replied, with the air of a soldier going to battle, as René laughingly remarked to Miss Greville.

"*Rien ne va plus*," said a croupier in a high

treble. Round went the wheel—whirr—click.

“*Treize, noir, impair, manque.*” Gold and silver and notes raked up—rouleaux and gold and silver paid out, and poor Valérie’s louis disappeared from her gaze to her great dismay.

“Never mind, my child,” whispered René consolingly. “You shall try one more louis on the numbers, and if you lose I will change the remainder into crowns. What number this time?”

“Thirty.”

Round spun the wheel, the ball half settled down in one number, then bounded out again into another.

“*Trente, rouge, pair et passe.* By Jove you’ve got it this time,” muttered several friendly voices.

“Lucky little beggar,” whispered René. “You are on the road to fortune.”

“Miss Greville,” he said, turning to that lady, who was watching the game with an air of mingled contempt and amusement, “beginners always win at first. Will you allow me to play a louis for you?”

"Certainly not," was the reply. "I trust I am too sensible to throw away my money so frivolously!"

"Don't be so severe, you frighten me!" laughed René. "Am I to leave on the lous?" he asked his wife, as he received and handed her her winnings.

"Oh yes!" exclaimed Valérie with sparkling eyes, "I am sure to win again."

"It is on the cards that you may, but don't be too sure," replied René.

"*Messieurs le jeu est fait*," said the croupier politely to the assembled "guests," whose faces all assumed different expressions. It was curious to watch those standing up, eagerly stretching their necks over the heads of those sitting down, the uninitiated amongst them vainly trying to follow the erratic movements of the ball.

"*Trente, rouge, pair et passe*," called out the treble-voiced croupier.

"I *knew* I should win!" exclaimed Valérie so loud and so triumphantly, that several of the players, who had themselves lost, turned

round and looked with reproachful eyes at this fortunate novice, who no doubt had brought them bad luck.

“Another proof of my abominable luck,” said the young Roman plaintively. “If I had had any money on the table, the first dozen would have come up every time. Now, to prove the truth of my words, look at this.” He threw a handful of gold on the last six.

A young Frenchman with a glass in his eye, which was always falling out, for the good reason that, not being short-sighted, whenever he wished to see he instinctively shook his head, whispered, “Now’s your time, Baremo, if you wish to win, put all the money you have on the first six,” and suiting the action to the words he tossed a billet to the croupier, whose face relaxed into a faint smile as the Frenchman by a sign made him understand where it was to be placed.

“He knows that we all play against poor little L., and it answers admirably,” remarked the Frenchman to Miss Greville.

“I am sure he would be very much dis-

appointed if he were this time," she replied, smiling. "He is not likely to be tried at ——"

"Zero," shouted the croupier.

"Did I not tell you I should lose," said the young Roman plaintively. "What I have done to deserve such ill luck I cannot conceive."

"Bad play, *mon cher*," said the Frenchman tacitly, as his crisp bank notes were gathered up with the rest of the money. "I was very near was I not?" he said, appealing to Miss Greville.

"Very near on the table, but a good way off on the wheel with one exception," was the reply.

"Oh, I thought you did not understand the game," he said maliciously.

"No more I do, but I don't think the profound knowledge of it you and the other gamblers have acquired seems to make much difference in the long run," retorted Miss Greville.

In the meantime Valérie's money had been

raked up by an unsympathetic croupier ; but as she had won so much René graciously allowed her to play another louis on the numbers.

“Where is it to go this time ?” he asked.

Valérie hesitated.

“I saw a man driving thirteen pigs to the old town as I walked from the Monaco station, if that is any assistance to you,” remarked a tall dark Englishman with a bald head. “I counted them on purpose, thinking that it might bring one luck.”

“Thirteen,” said Valérie decisively to René, who muttered “What childish nonsense,” as he placed the louis, in obedience to his wife’s request on the lucky number, while Valerie eagerly threw some crowns on the transvenal.

“You have faith in the pigs,” said the Englishman solemnly.

“The greatest,” answered Valérie with equal solemnity.

“There is something in it, no doubt,” was the ambiguous reply.

“*Rien ne va plus,*” a breathless silence as

the wheel spun round. "*Treize—noir, impair, manque!*"

"Hurrah for the pigs," said several voices. "Why did you not speak sooner, Trevelyan, and give us all time to back those amiable quadrupeds? You have taken an unfair advantage of us."

The Englishman smiled modestly, as one who had rendered good service to his country, repeating, "I thought from the first it might be a good tip, that—in short, there was something in it".

"I shall never see a pig without emotion again," exclaimed the Frenchman rapturously.

"I would I were a pig," quoted an idiotic little English boy with a straw coloured moustache and hair to match.

"It was fortunate for you, Madame, that I did not back thirteen, otherwise you would have most assuredly lost," said the ill-used Roman. "It is so hard upon me, for I spare neither pains nor trouble to win."

"The pigs might have broken the spell," suggested a friendly voice.

"Yes, there's a good deal in it, no doubt," repeated the Englishman with the bald head.

"I am very sorry you lose so often," said Valérie sympathetically. "Perhaps some day your luck will change."

The unhappy victim shook his head despondingly as he moved away.

"He's the worst playman I ever saw," said the Frenchman with the eye-glass. "He has had the most splendid opportunities of winning a large fortune, over and over again, and he has always thrown them away."

"But how did he know they were opportunities until too late to profit by them?" asked Miss Greville, with an amused twinkle in her small keen eyes.

"Madame," replied the Frenchman solemnly, "perhaps you are not aware that gambling is as much a science as—as—chemistry, or any other dead certainty," he added vaguely.

Miss Greville smiled compassionately, but made no reply, wondering whether the inmates of a madhouse could in reality be more hopelessly insane than her present companions.

"Valérie, I think I shall enter into partnership with you," said René confidentially.

"It is too late, dear René," she answered smilingly. "I have won enough, and do not mean to play any more."

"No more!" exclaimed several disapproving voices. "You should push your luck when you are winning."

"It is the true *jeu anglais* to play low when you win, or leave off altogether, and when you lose, double your stake every coup."

"Then I am a true Englishwoman by nature, though not by birth, for I am going to run away altogether," said Valerie laughing, as she left the tables, followed by Miss Greville.

"To hear all you fellows talk, one would imagine that Madame Baremo was in the habit of gambling every day, whereas this is the first time she has ever played, and in all probability it will be her last," said René, with ill-disguised anger.

"Oh, of course, my dear fellow, we all understand that perfectly," said several apologetic voices.

"It is precisely what I wish you to do—and to remember," replied René emphatically.

.
"What a bad tempered fellow Baremo is!" grumbled one of his friends, looking after René's retreating form.

"Very likely," was the reply, "but in this case I think he was justified. Hang it all! A man does not care to hear his wife spoken to by a conceited little jacknapes like G. as if she was one of these *petites dames*."

"Then he should not bring her here," retorted G.'s friend.

"I don't agree with you at all," said the tall Englishman, hotly. "A lady can go anywhere protected by her husband, and it's awfully bad form to take advantage of it."

"But who did? What are you talking about?"

"I'll be hanged if I know myself precisely," answered the Englishman laughing. "I suppose it is something in the atmosphere that has gone wrong."

In the meantime Valérie, with the eagerness of a child with a new toy, hastened to the gardens, where under the shelter of a thick shrubbery she could count her money without any fear of interruption. Miss Greville looked, as she felt, considerably scandalised, but Valérie took it all as a matter of course.

“And now, dear Miss Greville, I want you to do me a great favour,” said Valérie. “While I was dressing to come out my maid told me such a sad story, which I am going to tell you, and then you will understand how glad I was to win so much money.”

“Last week a poor Russian committed suicide—he threw himself off a rock, and was not found till the next day. He was a merchant, and had lost the savings of years at *trente et quarante*; and in his despair he wandered away, never going home at all, and his body was found by some fishermen some little distance from Monte Carlo. He has left a wife and children, and at first the poor creature went almost mad, but now, though she is calmer, she does nothing but moan, and

cry, and ask to be sent back to her own country, for they have no money at all, and owe a great deal in the place. When I heard this story I determined that if I won to-day, the money should be given to her."

"But not the whole!" exclaimed Miss Greville.

"The whole, of course," answered Valérie. "I played for her, not for myself, and it would be dishonest to keep back any portion of it; but," she continued, "the difficulty is, to know how to give it to her without wounding or offending her."

"But," continued Miss Greville, "I believe these matters are always arranged by the Administration, as in common justice they should be."

"I imagine the bitterness of accepting money, as compensation for her husband's death, from the people who, so to speak, were the cause of it," replied Valérie.

"Are sure of the truth of the story?" said Miss Greville. "In any case I think, dear Madame Baremo, it would be unwise to do

anything without first consulting your husband."

"Of course, I always tell René everything, and he will be very glad when he hears what I have done; but there is no time to consult him now; we shall not meet again before dinner, and I am going to take it to the poor woman at once," said Valérie wilfully.

"It is such a very large sum to give to an utter stranger; pray wait until you can speak to M. Baremo."

"So much the better for the poor widow," laughed Valérie. "And M. Baremo is not the miser you evidently imagine him to be. I shall tell him what a bad opinion you have of him when I see him."

.
An hour later, Miss Dorothy Greville, unwillingly, most unwillingly, found herself driving in a pony carriage in the direction of the widow's lodgings; by her side sat Valérie with a large envelope in her hand, containing the whole of her winnings at roulette, which she had duly sealed up and directed, and finally

deposited triumphantly in the astonished widow's hands.

"There!" she exclaimed, as she returned to Miss Greville, after having accomplished her errand, "I have made one person in the world happier on my birth-day."

"If only M. Baremo will see it in the same light," groaned Miss Greville.

"Do not look so unhappy," said Valérie laughing, "*please*. You spoil all my pleasure. Will it make you less uncomfortable if I tell you René knows all about it, and gave me leave to play for her, only he said I was not to tell any one, not even you, because he felt the inward conviction that people would call us two fools! There, are you any happier now you know the truth?"

.
"We are all poor creatures! very poor weak creatures after all is said!" reflected Miss Dorothy Greville in the privacy of her own room that night. "But I think if I were ruined or heart-broken I would sooner turn for help or sympathy to the René Baremo's of this

world, than to the narrow minded good religious people, priests, deaconesses and sisters of mercy to wit, who undoubtedly give alms to what they are pleased to call 'deserving objects,' but have never yet resisted the temptation of taking the worth of their money in contemptuous pity, galling advise, or insolent interference, beating down to the lowest depths of humiliation the unhappy pauper who has been driven by the vicissitudes of this bitter life under the grinding heel of their so-called Charity."

CHAPTER IV.

WORKING FOR THE POOR.

THERE were sitting round a large table, in a large saloon, in a large Hotel in a fashionable watering place in the South of Europe, five Christian ladies—not ordinary humdrum every day Christians, be it understood, but extra Christians—and a bride, and they were all working for the poor!

Such good women! So really charitable! So truly good! every one of them except the bride! and even her case was not absolutely desperate, since each of these kind Christians had resolved in her own heart to snatch this unregenerate brand from the burning. Foolish little brand! and all the time she was quite unaware of this terrible plot, and thought that she was only getting through the dull rainy

afternoon in an unpleasant way, partly to show Fred that she could do without him, since he had so barbarously deserted her for a game of billiards! Cruel selfish man, and they had only been married a fortnight and two days! How she yawned, to be sure, when she thought no one was looking, and how viciously she tried to prick her finger as much as possible, all to spite Fred, who did not like his wife's pretty delicate hand to resemble a distressed needlewoman's. She even went the length of trying to wish herself unmarried again and at home, the youngest of five sisters, but that would be spiting herself, as she well knew that even these five charitable ladies and Fred playing billiards was preferable. The lady at the head of the table with watery round eyes like a carp's, and faded whitey brown hair (she was too religious to dye it), and a white moustache and incipient beard, half down, half bristles, was Mrs. Paradise.

She was not a nice, inviting lady to look at, but then she was "so good"; and there was Mrs. Thorn, and Mrs. Pratt, and Miss Thring,

and Sister Eldreda, who was supposed to have "good blood in her veins," being distantly related to a noble family, a peculiarity which caused her fellow labourers to regard her with a certain amount of awe to which she was not insensible or indifferent, for Sister Eldreda was proud (in a Christian-like way) of being an offshoot of the noble house of H., and seldom lost an opportunity of alluding to "my cousin, the Duchess of Montorguid". Naturally, her fellow labourers bowed down before this religious little aristocrat, and pronounced her with one accord "the holiest of them all!"

So Sister Eldreda, who was knitting a stocking with her rather red but aristocratic hands, sat next the bride. And there were two other ladies in this big saloon who were evidently unacquainted with the group at the table: one of these ladies, Miss Dorothy Greville, had just come into the room, and Mrs. Norreys, who had been there a long time, nodded and smiled and pointed to an arm-chair of inviting appearance close to the sofa where she herself

was sitting, with a band of elaborate embroidery in her lap, and a basket filled with silks and various working materials on a small table by her side.

In her hand she held a small bound book, the contents of which she had occasionally revealed to a few trusty friends; and in this mysterious volume she was now engaged writing or making a sketch.

“I was in hopes the state of the weather would drive you to take refuge in the public sitting-room,” exclaimed Mrs. Norreys, as Miss Dorothy Greville seated herself in the luxurious arm-chair. “It is too bad to shut yourself up in your own room, and snarl at your friends who like to study human nature and to mix with their fellow creatures, and accuse them of a want of charity if they venture to laugh at the peculiarities they chance to discover in the course of their investigations; but you know I asked you to come and judge for yourself the last time you called me scandalous, and this afternoon you will have a fine opportunity of doing so. *I* have not had such a

treat for several weeks, and you have just come at the right moment.

“Dear good charitable creatures, they are making clothes for the poor, and *un*making reputations with the same industry,” and Mrs. Norreys glanced rather contemptuously at the coterie sitting round the table, and at the same time placed the little bound book in such a position that Miss Greville could see a spirited sketch of a lady holding in one hand a gigantic pair of scissors, and in the other a tract with

“PAUSE, GAMBLER!”

by Eden Paradise, printed on the cover. The authoress had apparently stopped in the middle of cutting out a pauper's garment to show her latest attempt in literature to an admiring audience.

The likeness was so admirable that Miss Greville could not refrain from laughing as she exclaimed, “What a wicked satirical person you are! So that is Mrs. Paradise! she looks as if she might be equal to most emergencies!”

"She is equal to anything!" answered Mrs. Norreys viciously. "I cannot endure her. She has just finished reading the whole of that tract from beginning to end, and you never heard such nonsense in your life."

"What is the subject?" asked Miss Greville, her small keen eyes twinkling with amusement.

"An exhortation to gamblers," replied Mrs. Norreys. "But imagine the conceit of the woman in supposing for an instant that anything she could say or urge would have the smallest weight one way or another. It appears that last night she distributed these ridiculous tracts throughout the hotel, charging her emissaries to put three or four in the rooms of certain well-known high players at the Clubs and Monte Carlo. This morning the gravel paths were strewn with her literary productions, which had all been thrown out of window; some had lodged in the shrubs, and several were found floating in the fish pond, and a few in the courtyard of the hotel; however, Mrs. Paradise, nothing daunted, had them all collected again for future distribution."

"She did not put one in my room," remarked Miss Greville in an awe-stricken whisper.

"Nor in mine," answered Mrs. Norreys laughing, "but to make up for the omission she put five in my husband's dressing-room, and he drowned them in his bath, and when I last saw them they were reduced to a state of neutral-tinted pulp."

"I wonder why poor people's clothes are always so remarkably hideous," said Miss Greville, who, regardless of good manners, had for the last five minutes been watching the industrious group at the round table with a feeling almost akin to admiration.

"Because they are the garments of charity," answered Mrs. Norreys. "Paupers have no right to wear pretty things, for the simple reason that they *are* paupers."

"Poor things," said Miss Greville compassionately, "it must be hard enough to wear the garments of charity, but the trial must be still more severe to feel oneself bound to curtesy to one's benefactors, and don the

charitable gown whose want of beauty proclaims that it is good enough for a pauper."

"What a proud stiff-necked pauper you would make," remarked Mrs. Norreys smiling.

"I *was* one almost for two or three years of my life," replied Miss Greville gravely, "and I know how wretched it feels; but it gave me an insight into human nature which I could never have attained by any other means: *on apprend vite à connaître le monde dans les situations exceptionnelles.*"

"She is bowing to you," exclaimed Mrs. Norreys in a low voice.

Miss Greville looked round nervously, and received a second bow and a gracious smile from Mrs. Paradise.

"How very odd!" remarked the astonished lady. "I have never seen her before in my life. What can be the meaning of it?"

"She looks upon you as a brand to be snatched at. When you return to your room you will find a bundle of tracts on your table," said her friend maliciously.

"Let us trust then that I shall have suffi-

cient moral courage to put them into my bath," replied Miss Greville good humouredly.

"Why don't they go on talking!" exclaimed Mrs. Norreys, who had taken up her embroidery and began to look bored. "They have abused and scandalised every one in the hotel. I was in hopes your turn would come. Shall I leave the room and give them an opportunity of picking holes in my reputation? It is hard upon you to have the trouble of coming here for nothing."

"No, no," said Miss Greville laughing. "I don't like scandal, so I am not at all disappointed. Who is the lady sitting next to Mrs. Paradise?"

"The lady on her right with her mouth full of pins is Mrs. Thorn, the one on the left making flannel petticoats is Miss Thring, then comes Sister Eldreda, and next to her that pretty fair-haired girl who is a bride, and about eighteen. Her husband looks nearly the same age, but as such a youthful couple would not be allowed to go about the world alone, we may conclude that he is twenty-one. Then

the lady making that ugly frock with huge lilac roses is Mrs. Pratt; her husband is a poor little meek man, but very sly I am afraid! He wears three green cans slung across his shoulders, and goes away for whole days in search of rare ferns, but evil spirits at Monte Carlo declare that he and his tins arrive there with unerring punctuality every afternoon, that the tins are concealed amongst the Marguerite bushes, and the botanist betakes himself to the *trente et quarante* table, where he is reported to win fabulous sums. His iniquities will be discovered some day, and then woe betide him! Hush, they are beginning to talk!"

"Will you not finish the story you were telling us about the wicked lady at Monaco?" said the bride wearily, laying down her work and trying to smooth out the puckers. "I have hemmed this pinafore so badly, but I suppose as it is only for a poor person's child it does not signify?" appealing to Sister Eldreda.

"Nay, when our work is done for the Lord,

surely the hems should be straighter and the stitches smaller than the work that is done for mere worldlings !”

“I don’t understand,” stammered the abashed little woman. “I thought it was a pinafore.”

“Sister Eldreda speaks in the abstract,” interrupted the lady with her mouth full of pins. “If the work is not neat it is very easy to unpick it again.”

“Oh, really I am very sorry, but I cannot unpick it!” exclaimed the bride piteously. “If it is spoilt I will buy another and give it to my maid to make.”

“I have no doubt it will do very well,” said Mrs. Paradise, who did not wish to frighten away a possible disciple for the sake of a baby’s puckered pinafore. “Allow me to look at it. Very nice indeed. How calmly you will rest to-night with the consciousness of having performed a real act of charity, all the more acceptable in the sight of the Almighty because the work was rather distasteful to you.”

“Dear friends,” exclaimed Sister Eldreda,

ecstatically clasping her hands, "is there any pleasure this world can give so sweet as the consciousness of being *good*?"

"Do you think so!" exclaimed the bride naïvely. "Do you know I am never so happy as when I know I am doing wrong, and Fred—that is my husband—is the same; he likes doing wrong best," she added, nodding her head defiantly at the disapproving faces round the table.

"Indeed," said Mrs. Paradise drily.

Miss Thring coughed hysterically.

Mrs. Thorn began to search for something in her work-basket.

Sister Eldreda murmured "Nay, nay," but Mrs. Pratt laid down her work, and took a prolonged stare at the bride, who grew crimson and began to work with unnatural rapidity.

For a long time the silence was unbroken, and the clothes for the poor advanced towards completion, when the bride, with the natural garrulity of youth, laid down her work and began to talk faster than ever.

At first her innocent remarks met with scant

response. The five Christian ladies had been outraged in their dearest prejudices by this little heathen, and they wished her to understand that they had been thus outraged, and that they were, one and all, keenly alive to the impossibility of touching pitch and remaining undefiled. But the bride was not aware that they considered her "pitch," and she had quite forgotten the idle words which had caused so much consternation, so she chatted on, and was quite satisfied with an occasional yes or no from one of her fellow-labourers.

Presently she had the temerity to address Mrs. Paradise herself, which caused the other four ladies to exchange glances of amazement; for none knew better than they how withering was the severity of that excellent lady when, as she expressed it herself, she considered it her duty "to pull a sinner up short".

"I was so interested in that story about the Monaco lady; will you not finish what you were telling us, dear Mrs. Paradise?"

Had the little bride been a disciple of Machiavelli, instead of an unfledged school-

girl, she could not have shown a greater knowledge of human nature. Almost any other remark addressed to Mrs. Paradise would have called forth a rebuke from that deeply offended lady, but the mystical word Monaco was irresistible—so absorbing that it was seldom out of her thoughts. It was her mission, she considered, in this life to preach a crusade against gambling, and to improve that archfiend Blanc and his satellites from off the face of the rock whereon they had so impudently perched themselves and their wicked trap.

“And I shall succeed!” she would sometimes exclaim in an ecstasy of fervour. “I feel it! I know it! Women have achieved greater triumphs before! I will not be daunted! I will not be discouraged! If needs be, I will speak to Blanc himself. I will *make* him hear what I have to say. I have a will of iron, and he shall realise it sooner or later. I will wrestle with him night and day until I have subdued his will to mine.”

Now it must be understood that Mrs. Paradise had no intention of engaging in a pugilistic encounter with the enemy of the human race, but when under the influence of religious excitement she was apt to indulge in expressions culled from the Bible, imagining that by this means her language carried weight and sanctity with it; and so by degrees the followers of Mrs. Paradise learnt to judge of the intensity of her earnestness by the number of Scriptural phrases she employed. When, therefore, she announced her intention of wrestling with a sinner, her most fervent admirers were wont to shudder, partly perhaps from a sneaking sense of compassion for the sinner, but still more in apprehension lest the day should arrive when she might consider it expedient to wrestle with them also. From which it may be gathered that we are all poor creatures, even the most valiant among us. So the bride, who was not above liking a little spiteful gossip notwithstanding her youth and innocence, turned imploring eyes on Mrs. Paradise, who responded graciously to the appeal.

"Well, as I was telling you, I saw them myself, and could have wept tears of shame as she stood by his side, eager with the excitement of gambling, so young, and not bad looking."

"Always over-dressed," interrupted the flannel petticoat lady.

"*Cela va sans dire*," replied Mrs. Paradise. "Vanity, extravagance, frivolity are synonymous. Alas! must I add depravity."

"Oh, how sad, how terribly sad!" groaned Sister Eldreda, pausing in the intricacies of knitting her stocking. "Could we not write and consult the dear Bishop, and implore him to say what had best be done?"

"Unfortunately she is a foreigner, and out of his jurisdiction," sighed Mrs. Thorn, who had hitherto appeared too much absorbed in the frock she was making to pay much attention to the conversation. "And yet a timely word of advice might cause her to step back from the brink, to pause—miserable lost creature!"

"Then *you* have heard the same report!" exclaimed Mrs. Paradise, leaning forward

eagerly, and dropping the scissors with which she was cutting out the work. "I always felt convinced it was true!" she added, almost too triumphantly for a good Christian.

"I was told on reliable authority that ——" said Mrs. Thorn, with a significant pause, an expressive shrug, and a glance at the rest of the party, who all stopped working for the poor to listen.

"Exactly. I heard precisely the same story. Shameful! shameful!!" exclaimed Mrs. Paradise.

"But what *is* the story," inquired the bride. "It is very amusing for you who understand what you mean, but I, at least, am in the dark. I saw her this morning, and thought her such a pretty graceful person, but perhaps ——" and the bride paused and regarded her fellow-workers with a comical glance of bewilderment.

"I see nothing to admire in her; *they* are all alike made up by their dressmakers and milliners," said the flannel petticoat lady with much asperity.

"I do so hate a mystery," said the bride impatiently. "Really, if you persist in talking in enigmas I shall run away and leave this ugly pinafore half finished! Is the lady not a lady, or what *has* she done?"

"She is a lady by birth, but that proves nothing, it only increases the disgrace of her having strayed from the right path."

"What path has she strayed from?" asked the bride, laughing. "She cannot have wandered very far, for I saw her with her husband in the garden this morning, and they both seemed very happy."

"Poor man!" groaned Mrs. Pratt.

"Weak, erring man, not poor," amended Mrs. Paradise.

"Men are always so blind," suggested Miss Thring feelingly.

"So absorbed in his own madness," corrected Mrs. Paradise.

"Is he mad?" asked the bride, in awe-stricken tones.

"Yes, and his madness has taken the worst form of insanity, the madness of vice!"

"How dreadful ! it sounds like a man with a ticket-of-leave, a sort of criminal lunatic, don't you know," gasped the bride incoherently ; "why *are* such people allowed to live in the Hotel, I wonder."

"Because," answered Mrs. Paradise severely, "in these latter days wickedness puts on so many disguises, and calls itself by such innocent names, and clothes itself in such attractive forms, that it no longer alarms good people who would shrink away in terror if they could see it in its naked hideousness, as we do who have mercifully been chosen for better things."

At this appalling picture the bride turned pale, and murmured something about looking for Fred.

"In short, we may conclude that one is as bad as the other," remarked Mrs. Pratt logically.

"Precisely," answered Mrs. Paradise. "Only a vicious woman is many degrees worse than a vicious man ; a woman, a girl young and fair, who ought to resemble the angels in purity and virtue," and Mrs. Paradise clasped her

hands together and turned up her eyes, in the vain endeavour to illustrate an angelic woman, "and to think," she continued, "that this creature, who not so long ago was an innocent babe in her mother's arms, should be now a shameless gambler, an imitator in dress and manners of a certain class to which it is unseemly to allude in the presence of pure-minded women. Alas! alas! to think, only to think, how that mother's heart would bleed if she could see her unhappy daughter now!"

There was a long awe-stricken silence.

"Who on earth is the lady?" whispered Miss Greville to her friend.

"I will tell you afterwards," answered Mrs. Norreys. "Listen, I entreat you, they are beginning again. Paupers' clothes and scandal!"

"The question is, what can be done?" remarked Mrs. Thorn, who appeared to have a practical turn of mind. "It is very sad, of course, as Sister Eldreda remarked, but then there are so many people like her in the world."

"Some one ought to tell the husband," replied Mrs. Pratt still more pactly.

"Yes; but surely, dear friends, it should be done anonymously," suggested Miss Thring.

"We already mention her name in our public devotions, and have begged other members of our Community of St. Joseph to do the same. Could we not also agree to pray for her privately at a certain hour each day, and ask the dear Bishop to give his sanction to the good work?" said Sister Eldreda.

"She rather admires the dear Bishop," whispered Mrs. Norreys to Miss Dorothy Greville, who was trying in vain to preserve a decent gravity of demeanour.

"Oh, Sister Eldreda!" exclaimed Miss Thring, "what a holy mind you have! indeed your sweet suggestion is the right course to follow!"

"Very proper indeed!" assented Mrs. Thorn, "but then who will undertake to lay the matter before the bishop?"

There was a long pause, then Sister Eldreda murmured timidly, "I will, gladly, if you think I am worthy to do so".

"What a little hypocrite!" whispered Mrs. Norreys. "I call it most barefaced and immodest on the part of a nun. We shall be obliged to remonstrate; what is your opinion, Miss Greville?"

But poor Miss Greville, whose sense of the ridiculous was, unhappily for herself, exceedingly keen, appeared unable to give any opinion upon the subject.

"Still, I should let the husband know in the meantime," persisted practical Mrs. Thorn, who seemed to have a taste for domestic *esclandres*.

"Yes, but *indeed* anonymously," reiterated Miss Thring. "My brother is a lawyer, and I know how very dangerous it is to *write* anything which can be construed into a libel. One may *say* anything one likes about people without any risk, but it is very different to *write* an accusation."

"You mean, one may say anything that is true?" suggested the bride.

"Oh, no," ingenuously replied Miss Thring, "that is not the least necessary, so my brother says, and he is very clever."

"What a pity his sister does not resemble him," whispered Mrs. Norreys in poor Miss Greville's unwilling ear.

"We must consider the expediency of what you suggest," said Mrs. Paradise reflectively.

"In the meantime, let us pray," murmured dove-like Eldreda.

"Yes, let us pray," said Mrs. Paradise, pushing back her chair, and preparing to go down on her knees.

"What, now?" almost screamed the little bride. "Pray lock the door, some one, it would look so—so odd to see us all kneeling down, if Fred, if anyone, should come into the room."

"Odd!! odd to pray for an erring fellow-creature!" exclaimed Mrs. Paradise severely.

"Odd!" indignantly repeated Mrs. Thorn, pushing back her chair.

"Odd!" said Mrs. Pratt, pushing back hers.

"Odd!" faintly echoed Miss Thring.

"Nay, nay," cooed Sister Eldreda.

The bride's face grew crimson. Evidently she was going to cry.

She glanced anxiously at Mrs. Norreys and Miss Dorothy Greville, whose averted countenances rivalled hers in redness, then throwing down the pauper's pinafore, and repeating nervously, "Oh, I cannot, indeed I cannot, what *would* Fred say?" she jumped up, and fairly ran out of the room, or rather into her husband's arms, who opened the door at the critical moment of his wife's flight.

"What is the matter, Dolly?" he exclaimed, looking in astonishment from his wife's distressed and crimson face to the five indignant countenances of the industrious Christians standing round the table. "Have those old ladies been bullying you?"

"Oh, Fred, hush! I will tell you presently," grasped the bride, as clinging to her natural protector's arm she left the room.

.
"I have often been told that those Communities of Good Women in Protestant England are simple hot-beds of scandal and all uncharitableness," exclaimed Mrs. Norreys, as hastily collecting her work she also prepared

to leave the room with her friend, "and these amiable ladies have given ample proof of the truth of the assertion."

"But who is the lady with the mad husband?" inquired Miss Dorothy Greville.

"Madame Baremo," replied Mrs. Norreys.

"It is impossible!" exclaimed Miss Greville indignantly. "There is not the slightest foundation for such accusations as they made!"

"That is by no means necessary where Mrs. Paradise and her satellites are concerned. It is no sin in their eyes to blast an innocent woman's reputation, always provided she is defenceless, and not likely to pull her defamers up for libel—if by so doing they can advance what they are pleased to call the cause of religion, even by a hair's breadth," said Mrs. Norreys.

"But it is a shame and a disgrace," began Miss Dorothy Greville indignantly, "and these people pride themselves on their goodness."

"Now, may the good God pardon all good people," quoted Mrs. Norreys, as graver than was her wont she turned away in the direction of her own rooms.

CHAPTER V.

WRANGLING AND WRESTLING.

MISS Dorothy Greville re-entered her room in a great state of perplexity.

Had not the time arrived when she was called upon to befriend Madame Baremo, as her cousin had so earnestly entreated? But how was it to be done? she asked herself over and over again.

If on her own responsibility she called Mrs. Paradise and her satellites to account, she would be taking a step which her very recent acquaintance with the Baremos hardly justified; and if, instead of interfering in the matter herself, she related all she had overheard to M. Baremo, she would be compelled to refer him to Mrs. Norreys as her authority, for after all the clique of Good Women had mentioned no.

names. And yet how could she remain silent, knowing that the fair fame of a perfectly innocent girl was being whispered away by those evil-tongued "Christians," whose reputation for deeds of charity would assuredly lend weight to their words with certain people who had not sufficient discrimination to separate the gold from the dross, the wheat from the chaff.

"Surely," soliloquised Miss Greville, according to her wont, "in the end truth must triumph over falsehood, innocence over malice—even the deadly malice which conceals its ugly form under the double cloak of religion and charity."

After much reflection Miss Greville resolved to wait and watch, without making any talk or scandal. Madame Baremo's life gave a daily denial to the accusations brought against her by five or six insignificant old women; and in any case her husband was always there protect her, if necessary.

Poor Madame Baremo! Little she recked of the time so fast approaching when her hus-

band's love and affection would be taken from her, leaving her to live her life as best she could without him ; and far enough away was such a contingency from Miss Greville's thoughts, as she pondered over these affairs in the solitude of her own room. Her meditations were interrupted by the entrance of a servant with a letter. She opened it, not recognising the handwriting, and read as follows :—

“DEAR MISS GREVILLE,

“I am writing to you at the request of a very dear friend, who is staying in the same hotel as yourself. I allude to Mrs. Paradise, who is extremely desirous of being presented to you by a mutual friend. May I venture to claim such a title ? I was spending a few days in the same house with you once, and have never forgotten you—and will you permit me to perform the introduction by letter ?

“I am sure you will not reproach me hereafter, when you learn to know and value my

good friend. Such wonderful large heartedness! Such Christian Charity!! Such devotion to afflicted Brethren!!!

“My eyes brim over with tears as I dwell upon the inestimable qualities which have so endeared her to her fellow-workers in the Lord.

“That her friendship may prove as precious a treasure to you, as it already is to the many admirers who, with stumbling faltering steps, strive to follow in her path, will be my earnest prayer for the future. Dear Miss Greville,

Yours most sincerely,

MATILDA ANNE BRAYE.”

“Who on earth is Matilda Anne Braye!” exclaimed Miss Greville, “and what have I done to bring down on my unlucky head, not only this letter filled with arrant twaddle and notes of admiration, but a possible introduction to that insufferable Mrs. Paradise.

“No, I will *not* be presented to your fellow-worker, either by letter or by any other

means," said Miss Greville, tapping her foot resolutely on the ground. "It is bad enough to live in the same hotel with such a narrow-minded scandalous hypocritical ——" Miss Greville paused to take breath, and to think of a fresh adjective.

Tap—tap—tap.

"*Entrez.*"

Tap—tap—tap—tap.

"*En-trez.*"

"*May* I come in?" said a shrill harsh voice, "so good of you to admit me! I know I ought to have sent my card, and waited for your permission to call, and have done, in short, all that is required by strict etiquette but—in fact, you will excuse me, will you not? You look so kind! I am so frank and trusting myself, and you look so much too gentle to be very severe."

Was this extraordinary visitor indulging in the bitterest sarcasm at the expense of Miss Greville?

Had she come for the express purpose of insulting the aggrieved lady in her own sitting-room?

She kind ! she gentle ! when she was glaring—scowling at her unwelcome visitor with an indignant severity she did not seek to disguise. This visitor it is unnecessary to explain was Mrs. Paradise. For a few seconds the two ladies stood confronting each other in complete silence, then Mrs. Paradise spoke again.

“Ah, I see you have a letter from our mutual friend !” glancing at the epistle Miss Greville still held open in her hand. “Impossible to mistake the handwriting, it is so characteristic, is it not ? I also received one from her not half an hour ago,” said Mrs. Paradise, holding up a letter for Miss Greville’s inspection, who did not condescend to glance at it, so angry was she with the effrontery of her visitor, and the officiousness of the mutual friend.

“Since you have thought it advisable to come,” said Miss Greville, “will you sit down while I explain that I have not the honour of Mrs. or Miss Braye’s ——”

“Miss Braye,” interrupted Mrs. Paradise,

with a compassionate smile, "she is a maiden lady like yourself."

"Indeed. Well, I have not the honour of knowing her, and I am at a loss to understand her motive in writing to me."

"How strange of her not to have explained, dear creature."

"She did explain that she wrote by your request, but I do not accept such an explanation."

"Exactly," interrupted Mrs. Paradise, "Then I am alone to blame—if blame there is. I expressed to my friend the great desire I felt to know you, not merely as an every day acquaintance, but on the firmer basis of mutual esteem."

"You are too kind!" exclaimed Miss Greville ironically, regarding her self-invited guest with increasing aversion.

"Nay, dear Christian friend, not kind, surely that is too cold a word to use!" answered Mrs. Paradise, putting her head on one side, and holding out a bony hand which Miss Greville pretended not to see.

"Any word you prefer," was the impatient answer, "but you must allow me to tell you that I have neither time nor inclination to make any fresh acquaintances, and I live almost entirely in my own rooms to avoid doing so."

"You are very frank," responded Mrs. Paradise, "I am not at all offended. I am such a candid creature myself, and there is a link between us, invisible though it be to mortal eyes, which cannot be broken by rough words."

Miss Greville gazed in silent amazement at this wonderful lady, whose round blue eyes grew watery, the tip of her sharp nose exceedingly red, while her voice sank into a scarcely audible whisper.

"Yes," she continued, "an invisible link, for we are both wrestling for an immortal soul—you after your fashion, I after mine. You are a good woman, but you are not a Christian in the truest sense of the word, and it is given to me to come between you and one whom you have not the courage to lead to

better things, because you are still compassed about with earthly shadows."

"I have no idea what you mean," replied Miss Greville, "and it appears to me that you are talking a great deal of nonsense; and as I have an engagement this evening I must beg you to consider our interview at an end."

"No, Christian friend," said Mrs. Paradise, rising hastily and laying her thin hard hand on Miss Greville's arm, "for the sake of a precious, nearly lost soul you must stay and listen to me."

"Are you mad?" exclaimed Miss Greville, growing alarmed, and hastily approaching the bell in case her guest's increasing excitement should become uncontrollable. "I assure you I have not the faintest idea what you can mean."

"No, I am not mad," replied Mrs. Paradise, seizing Miss Greville by the arm, "only terribly in earnest. I entreat you by all that you hold sacred to listen to me ere it be too late."

Miss Greville hesitated, half angry, half

impressed by the earnestness of her visitor's manner.

"I have still ten minutes to spare," she said at length; "what is it you wish to tell me? And whatever it may be, will you put it in the simplest, plainest language? I cannot understand exaggerated high flown expressions such as you have been using during the last half-hour," and with unconcealed weariness Miss Greville prepared to listen to Mrs. Paradise's revelations, comforting herself with the reflection that this visit, like everything else in this world, must come to an end sooner or later.

"I saw you at Monte Carlo a fortnight ago," began Mrs. Paradise in a sepulchral voice.

"Very probably," answered Miss Greville indifferently.

"Yes, but you were in those sinful rooms where no true Christian should enter," said Mrs. Paradise.

"It appears that you entered them, otherwise you could not have seen me," retorted Miss Greville, with more truth than dignity.

"I did, my Christian friend, but it is my mission to go into abodes of sin and misery, to try in my small and humble way to snatch poor sinners from their doom, as they hasten downwards to perdition ; and for that purpose alone, I, in company with three other Christians, entered the abode of the devil and his angels, to save some brands from the burning."

"I hope you were successful?" said Miss Greville politely.

"That will be known in the days to come," replied Mrs. Paradise. "We sowed the good seed by offering books and advice to the miserable gamblers who, having lost all their money, were turning away in agony from the tables. There was one young man who might have been handsome but for the fiendish expression vice had impressed on his features. Poor fallen angel ! he was very tall and very dark, and he was striding up and down the room, using the most frightful language, all the more appalling because he had an impediment in his speech. I saw in him a brand to be snatched. I approached him, holding out

one of my little works of consolation. My Christian friend, the expression of that unhappy young man's face I shall never forget! A blackness of night came over his features, his eyes rolled and glared like two burning coals, he stuttered and struggled for utterance, and his lips succeeded at last in framing two dreadful oaths. Yes! he swore at me! at me! the friend who would have led him to better things. I would not allow myself to be discouraged. I smiled, with as much gentleness as possible, and continued to hold out my little book, whispering, 'Pause, poor friend, while there is yet time!'

"I thought I had won him, for suddenly his whole face was illuminated by a smile. I smiled too in thankfulness, but alas! the hardness of heart of a perverted soul! The miserable young man stopped a fellow-gambler, who passed at the moment, and pointed me out, exclaimed, in the disagreeable *argot* used by men of his class, 'I say, such a r—r—rum old p—p—party, a case for Bb—bedlam, I'm afraid.'"

Miss Greville, in spite of her annoyance, could not help laughing; but Mrs. Paradise continued with increased solemnity. "Yes, for the moment he escaped me, but let him know wherever he is that I have my eye upon him still.

"In the meantime my fellow-workers employed their time in depositing my consolation tracts under the hats left by the gamesters on the sofas, but before we could see the result, the servants of M. Blanc came to us, and requested us to leave the Casino. I remonstrated, but they escorted us to the entrance hall, as if we were prisoners in custody.

"This indignity was brought upon us at the instigation of that infidel and gamester, the Marchese Baremo. I offered him one of my *Pause! Gamblers*, and requested him to reflect before he allowed his young wife to approach the tables a second time; he refused the book, made me a low bow, and grinned at me like an idiot; he went at once to the Commissaire, pointed us out, laughing as if there was any joke in the matter; and shortly afterwards we

were compelled to leave the rooms, a small crowd of Englishmen collecting to see their countrywomen insulted."

Mrs. Paradise clasped her hands, and raised her eyes to the ceiling, protesting silently.

All this time Miss Greville had maintained with much difficulty a grave and unbroken silence; she felt that the smallest encouragement on her part would tempt Mrs. Paradise to wrestle with her, and Miss Greville's sole desire was to rid herself of that lady's company at once and for ever.

The silence became embarrassing. Mrs. Paradise stared at the ceiling, and Miss Greville stared at her.

At length, "Have you finished what you wished to say?" inquired Miss Greville in her most frigid tone.

"Not exactly, I have been only leading up to it," replied Mrs. Paradise.

This announcement was the last straw.

Miss Greville sprang from her seat and walked hastily towards the door; but Mrs. Paradise was too quick for her, she placed her

back upon this only means of exit, and extending her hands towards her indignant hostess, exclaimed, "Bear with me for ten minutes longer, until I explain what I came to say, my Christian friend, I entreat you."

Miss Greville groaned aloud, there was nothing left but to submit, for how could she take Mrs. Paradise by the shoulders and push her out of the way?

Mrs. Paradise did not give her time to speak, but continued hastily, "It was on the memorable day of which I speak, when I first saw you in the gambling rooms at Monte Carlo: that unhappy girl stood near you, encouraging her husband to stake his money more recklessly than usual; she was surrounded by half-a-dozen vicious and disreputable young men, whose usual companions are those powdered, painted, bedizened women whose ——"

"Names you ought to be ashamed of mentioning in conjunction with the Marchessa Baremo," interrupted Miss Greville; "but understand, this is a subject I utterly decline

to discuss. I have the greatest regard for the lady you have ventured to insult."

"And yet you allow her to risk her precious soul?"

"And," continued Miss Greville, unheeding the interruption, "I beg you to understand that any liberty taken with her name in my presence will be resented by me fully as much as if it was directed against myself; moreover, if any scandalous stories are circulated in this hotel regarding this same lady, I shall mention the matter to her husband, giving up the names of the ladies whom I believe to have invented these reports out of pure malice."

"I would certainly advise you to do so," said Mrs. Paradise, growing very red, and putting aside her previous *rôle* of good Christian; "and at the same time you would do well to mention that the injured lady, whose reputation has been destroyed out of pure malice, is in the habit of meeting a gentleman clandestinely, and giving him large sums of money, unknown, I should imagine, to M. Baremo," with a bitter sneer.

"A simple falsehood, without even the shadow of a foundation," replied Miss Greville contemptuously.

"A falsehood! ask the woman at the book-stall at Monaco what she has seen! ask my maid what she was told only a week ago," said Mrs. Paradise, growing more and more excited.

"I certainly shall not condescend to obtain information from such a source as you mention," replied Miss Greville calmly. "I am not in the habit of collecting gossip from the servants' hall, nor am I a female detective."

"Miss Greville," replied Mrs. Paradise mournfully, "I am used to hard words, more especially from those whom I wish to benefit, but I have got my work to do, and I must do it. Dear friend, I must wrestle with you for your precious soul."

"Have the goodness to leave my soul alone," exclaimed Miss Greville, angrily at first, but as the absurdity of the situation dawned upon her, she burst into a peal of laughter, which had the effect of irritating Mrs. Paradise beyond all control.

"The mirth of ——" began the irate lady, but Miss Greville did not permit her to finish her sentence.

"I positively insist upon this interview coming to an end," she said with dignity, "and unless you go at once, I shall leave you in possession of my room, and take refuge somewhere else."

"So you turn me out of your room," exclaimed Mrs. Paradise. "So be it! You refuse to wrestle with me for that young woman's soul? So be it! You intend to risk your own by haunting that abode of vice. So be it! And lead others into the same peril by your evil example? So be it! so be it! But I will save her from herself, and triumph in the end, as I have done with many a sinner before, as I will do with you some day, if you fall ill and come to die while I am near you," added Mrs. Paradise, with a hungry gleam in her blue eyes.

Miss Greville shuddered visibly, but maintained a profound silence.

"Good evening, Miss Greville, I will pray

every day—once a day at least in public or private—that your heart may be softened, and your mind turned to better things, and above all, that you may be hindered from leading your poor young victim, Madame Baremo, into further temptation by your sinful advice and evil example. Recollect the warning given to us about the mill stone, and the little ones, and the depths of the sea. *Good evening, Miss Greville,*” and drawing a bundle of tracts from her pocket, Mrs. Paradise deposited them on a table, and took herself out of the room, leaving Miss Greville surprised and exhausted, but mistress of the position.

CHAPTER VI.

THE HILLS OF TURBIA.

“THE train is five minutes late,” said M. Baremo, consulting his watch. “I hope they will not get out at the Monaco station.”

“I hope not too,” said his companion, a fair slight young Englishman, and he added shyly, after a moment’s hesitation, and growing very red, “I hope they will *both* come, I mean, I suppose Madame Baremo quite understood that Miss Lizzie Black was trusting to her as a chaperon, and that she had only agreed to come on those conditions.”

“Oh, quite, I have no doubt,” said M. Baremo, turning away to conceal a smile at his companion’s expense.

“Oh, of course, it is very easy to laugh, but

when one is engaged, or as good as engaged, to a girl, it is not unnatural to be anxious about her," was the impatient reply.

"My dear Jack, did I insinuate that your anxiety regarding Miss Lizzie Black's welfare was unnatural, because I did not intend to imply anything of the sort?"

"Well, perhaps not, old fellow, but when one sees a chap's moustache turn up at the ends in a sort of cynical way you know, one understands what it means," said Mr. Jack Lascelles, in a trifle less aggrieved voice.

M. Baremo smoothed the offending moustache, which to tell the truth showed greater symptoms than ever of turning up at the ends, its owner laughing outright as he exclaimed, "Poor Jack! so you are actually engaged to the fascinating little American girl".

"Well, no, perhaps not exactly that, you know," responded Mr. Lascelles, with a certain degree of embarrassment, "but we understand each other, which is much the same thing, you know, old fellow."

"Ah, exactly," replied Monsieur Baremo

absently—he was engaged in watching the train as it slowly steamed round the curve into the little station.

Two bright faces looked out of the window of one of the carriages, and nodded gaily to the two men, who hastened along the platform to greet them.

“Here you are!” said M. Baremo.

“Here you are!” said Mr. Lascelles.

“I guess we are,” replied Miss Lizzie Black, in soft drawling tones, which to Mr. Lascelles’ infatuated ears sounded like the sweetest music.

But Valérie whispered softly to her husband as he half lifted her to the ground, “Oh, René darling, it has seemed so long”.

Monsieur and Madame Baremo had been separated for the space of fifteen hours, and to Valérie it had seemed like as many days.

René had slept at Monaco in order to get his “day’s work” over, and give himself a holiday for twenty-four hours, though in his inmost heart he considered this holiday a sad waste of time—and money.

While they were driving from the station

M. Baremo contrived to tell his wife that the previous evening he had won past all his expectations, so large a sum, in fact, that he only required five hundred pounds more to complete the necessary funds for the purchase money. This information he imparted under cover of a flow of badinage passing between Miss Lizzie Black and Mr. Lascelles, who were too much absorbed in one another to pay any attention to their companions.

"Take the capital," suggested Valérie, "and add it to the winnings, and you will have the exact sum you require."

René shook his head, and laughed at his wife's ideas of arithmetic, and at the same moment the carriage drew up in front of the Hotel de Paris.

A group of gaily dressed people were standing talking on the terrace, evidently preparing to start on some expedition.

It was a gay and animated scene.

Seven or eight pony carriages were drawn up on one side of the hotel steps, the horses decorated with bright flowers stuck into

their harness, and the drivers wearing the same in their hat ribbons, according to the custom of the country; a few horses saddled were being led about by their grooms, who looked with an air of derision at a group of fifteen or twenty donkies huddled together, their long ears moving restlessly, and their patient heads hanging dejectedly, saddled and bridled, and guarded by a dozen chattering boys and young women, all provided, more or less, with thick sticks, destined for the future chastisement of their refractory charges.

Servants were hurrying to and from the hotel carrying hampers of wine and provisions, which they stowed away in a waggonette under the superintendence of the director of the hotel, who had undertaken to provide for the requirements of upwards of thirty hungry guests, not including their still hungrier servants.

All these preparations proclaimed a pic-nic on a large scale, and such was the case. Mr. Grimshaw, the gentleman with the bald head and shining face referred to at the beginning

of this story by Mrs. Paradise, had at length proved the truth of his assertion regarding his favourite numbers *deux et zero*, "*it will come*".

It had come, "*due*" and zero, not once, twice, but many times in succession, and for several days running, and the fortunate winner was so elated that he invited all his friends and acquaintances to be his guests at a pic-nic.

The place chosen was a pretty open bit of ground near Turbia, a belt of fir trees gave a certain amount of shade without shutting out the magnificent view, and a person with a very elastic imagination might have called the coarse green herbage downs, anyhow it passed for such in a burnt up country where green fresh grass is unknown.

· · · · ·
"How de do, Madame Baremo," exclaimed the host, hurrying down the steps from the hotel to the intense relief of the servants, who could not understand his very peculiar French and his British eccentricities, but were too well drilled to betray their astonishment. "How de do, Madame Baremo, I am charmed to see

you. How de do, Miss Lizzie Black, I have been thinking of you the whole morning," his face shining and beaming with delight the while.

"Well, now, I guess you have not been doing anything of the kind," replied that young lady calmly, turning her forget-me-not eyes with an air of scrutiny on the crimson complexion of her host.

"Ah, you will see, you will see presently," he replied delightedly, hastening away to greet another arrival.

"Disgusting little snob," muttered Mr. Lascelles, his grey eyes scowling at the retreating form of Mr. Grimshaw, who had arrayed himself for the festive occasion in a complete suit of some white material.

"Well, now, I think you had better not accept his hospitality if you are going to abuse him behind his back," remarked Miss Black.

"Very good," said Mr. Lascelles. "I will return by the next train to Nice; in the meantime, I will leave you to the care of Mr. Grim-

shaw, since you consider him such a well-bred agreeable man."

"Good bye," said Miss Lizzie Black composedly. "I hope you will spend a pleasant afternoon at Nice—the dust was real disgusting when we left, but perhaps it will have calmed down a little by the time you get back."

"You don't care a straw for me, Lizzie," whispered the infatuated Englishman.

"Well, I guess you had better call me Miss Black," retorted his fair tormentor, smiling sweetly.

"Perhaps I had better never speak to you again," was the deeply offended reply.

"When you two good people have finished your dispute we had better make a start," interposed M. Baremo, who was too well accustomed to his friend's lover-like quarrels to treat them with any consideration. "Madame Baremo has been ready for the last ten minutes."

Miss Black had scarcely taken her place by Valérie's side when Mr. Grimshaw hurried

up to the carriage in a great state of excitement.

"You are surely not going to *drive*, Miss Black?" he exclaimed in consternation.

"I guess that is about what I am going to do," replied that young lady languidly.

"I had a side saddle put on one of my horses expressly for you, it carries a lady beautifully, pray do me the honour of riding it," pleaded the little man.

"Well, I guess I am not going to ride on a horse's back, dressed in pink stripes," replied Miss Lizzie Black, contemplating the silky folds of her pretty pink and grey gown.

"Will you ride on a donkey?" persisted Mr. Grimshaw. "I will pin a shawl round your dress, and walk by your side the whole way."

"Well, now, I guess you had better ask Miss Bang. I guess she will not say no," replied Miss Lizzie Black, leaning back in her corner of the carriage, and putting up her parasol.

Mr. Grimshaw retired crestfallen; the glory and beauty of the day was at an end for him.

With jealous eyes he watched the carriage disappear from his sight. The happy fortunate carriage that contained Miss Lizzie V. P. Black, and her happy fortunate companions, M. and Madame Baremo, and "that conceited ass, Jack Lascelles".

Making use of adjectives was the sole consolation left to Mr. Grimshaw.

"I shall be happy to accompany you," said a squeaky voice at his elbow; he turned abruptly round at the sound, and found himself face to face with Mrs. Paradise, who had been an unobserved and silent spectator of his unsuccessful appeal to Miss Lizzie Black. "I shall be happy to accompany you," she repeated blandly, "I delight in riding on a donkey, it reminds me of the 'merrie days when I was young'."

Mr. Grimshaw's face was piteous to behold; he glanced helplessly from side to side, casting about for any tangible excuse to escape from this crowning misfortune.

"I thought of walking," he feebly stammered at length.

"Charming!" said Mrs. Paradise affably, "I will promise not to go out of a foot's pace, and so you can walk by my side and converse quite *à votre aise*."

For an instant Mr. Grimshaw felt tempted to declare that he intended, and had always intended from the beginning, to *galop* up the stony road to Turbia on the fleetest donkey he could find, but *à quoi bon?* would not Mrs. Paradise in that case announce her readiness to galop too?

"What an ass I was to give a pic-nic!" reflected unhappy Mr. Grimshaw, as with lagging steps he accompanied Mrs. Paradise to choose a likely donkey.

By this time the procession of donkey riders had mostly started up the paved mule track leading to La Turbia. Mrs. Paradise and Mr. Grimshaw brought up the rear, the latter looking enviously at the young men and maidens, who preceded them, laughing and talking gaily, as their unwilling steeds clattered up

the stony path. With one exception, Mr. Grimshaw was by far the unhappiest person in that gay cavalcade. The one exception was Miss Thring, who, at Mrs. Paradise's earnest request, had been invited to join the party. This lady was mounted on a small, black, wicked-looking donkey, which, in spite of repeated blows, refused to hasten its steps, preferring to try by every means in its power to dislodge its terrified rider, who, clinging with one hand to the pommel and with the other to a certain little black bag—the property of Mrs. Paradise—uttered from time to time piteous entreaties to her fellow-travellers to come to her assistance.

These entreaties, as a rule, met with scant response.

“Oh!” groaned Miss Thring, “these wicked, worldly, irreligious people are always so unfeeling and self-absorbed!”

Whack! whack! whack! three successive blows sharply administered by the refractory donkey's driver, caused that indignant animal to give three successive kicks in the air so

viciously, and with so much effect, that its unhappy rider disappeared over its head, little black bag and all, and alighted with a grievous thump on the paved ground.

Mrs. Paradise and Mr. Grimshaw hastened to her assistance.

"I ache all over—all over," moaned the sufferer, sitting where she had fallen in helpless misery; "it was the black bag that did it—if I could have held on to the pommel with *both* hands it would not have happened. It was that black bag!" she repeated, casting reproachful glances at the bag's owner.

"Hark, dear Christian friend, we must all suffer more or less for the good work we have undertaken!" said Mrs. Paradise soothingly. "Bear your bruises in a meek, contented spirit, and say a little prayer of thanksgiving for the pain you now suffer, and should it become even more severe you will only rejoice."

"I shall not do anything of the sort," responded Miss Thring with much asperity, "no more would you, if you were black and blue from head to foot as I am!"

“Mount on that little beast again ! no, not if I sit here for the rest of my life !” was the indignant reply to Mr. Grimshaw’s polite suggestion, that if Miss Thring felt sufficiently recovered, it would be advisable to resume their journey.

“I will ride the wicked little donkey,” said Mrs. Paradise, hastening towards the vicious animal, which, with drooping ears, was slowly recovering from the severe chastisement it had received at the hands of its master ; “it will recall those ‘merrie, merrie days’ when we used to run donkey races on the sands at Weymouth. Please give me my little black bag, it contains much precious comfort.”

“Has she brought her own luncheon and private flask ?” wondered Mr. Grimshaw, as he handed Mrs. Paradise her property. For some time the tranquillity of the journey was disturbed by Miss Thring’s groans and lamentations, that lady failing to rejoice in her bruises, as her friend had suggested ; but at length, to Mr. Grimshaw’s infinite satisfaction, they came in sight of the rest of the party ; far above

them, slowly mounting the winding path, but not so far ahead as he had feared.

At length Mr. Grimshaw and his companions came to a steep patch in the road, protected on the right side by a strong and brambly bank; while on the left the path ran along the extreme edge of a terrace many feet below the road. At this critical moment Mrs. Paradise's steed began once more to show symptoms of insubordination, delining to walk straight, and otherwise behaving in a strange and uncomfortable manner.

"Poor little donkey, pretty creature," said Mrs. Paradise, patting its neck, and gently shaking the reins; but it was a stiff wicked animal, not amenable to kindness.

"Eee-eee," said the donkey boy.

"Gee-up," said Mr. Grimshaw, keeping well out of reach of its heels.

"Go on, donkey," chirped Mrs. Paradise.

But it preferred to stand still.

"Now, you see for yourself what a beast it is!" called out Miss Thring triumphantly.

"*Sa—cr-r-r-ré,*" shouted the boy in his wrath.

"*Non, non,* remonstrated Mrs. Paradise severely, "*il ne faut pas jurer! c'est méchant! c'est blasphème!*"

It was getting past a joke!

"Confound the donkey and these old women!" thought Mr. Grimshaw. "At this rate we shall spend the night here."

He seized the bridle and tugged at its head, and the boy whacked it behind, but the donkey stood firm; it was making up its mind! With a sudden bound forward, it knocked Mr. Grimshaw flat on his back, and then twisting itself round, it rushed sideways at the stony bank with its head towards home, tried to brush Mrs. Paradise off its back, by crushing her against the stones and brambles.

"Oh, oh, it's killing me!" she screamed, "it's breaking both my legs."

Mr. Grimshaw and the boy flew to the rescue, but Miss Thring, seated comfortably on her steed, muttered—"Say a little prayer of thanksgiving, dear Christian friend, and the

more severely you are hurt, the more you will rejoice, which proves the truth of the assertion, that under severe provocation even a worm will turn."

"One does not know where to take the brute," said Mr. Grimshaw plaintively, "if one goes in front, one is sent sprawling on one's back, and if one goes behind, it kicks up."

"I think I will alight," said Mrs. Paradise nervously, "if some one will assist me"; but as Mr. Grimshaw caustiously approached, the donkey, detecting a fresh plot, swerved violently to the left, and planting its fore legs firmly on the extreme edge of the path, buried its nose in the topmost branches of a large lemon tree growing on the terrace below, and began a series of small premonitory kicks, not dangerous as yet, but highly suggestive of what might follow.

Mr. Grimshaw grasped the bridle firmly on one side and pulled; and the donkey boy grasped it firmly on the other side, and he pulled too; and Mrs. Paradise dropping the bag held on convulsively with both hands,

while Miss Thring kept up a running accompaniment of small shrill screams; but the donkey was a match for them all four: he kicked, and he kicked, and he kicked so high; and while his heels went up, his nose went down, until the highest kick of all came, and Mrs. Paradise could keep her seat no longer.

With a shout of terror, that unfortunate lady glided over the donkey's nose into the middle of the lemon tree, through whose fragrant but thorny branches she—with much crackling of boughs, and ejaculations of anguish and wild clutchings—slowly, slowly disappeared earthwards.

.

Some one called. Dick, belonging to the party in front, happened to look back at this juncture, and taking in the whole situation at a glance, said hastily to his friend—"I say, Teddie, old fellow, don't look back for your life, but cut along as fast as you can. Grimshaw's old ladies are being kicked off their donkeys—one is in a lemon tree—and if Grim-

shaw sees us he is safe to hail us, and I'll be hanged if I go down this beastly hill again."

"Oh, I say, I want to see the fun too," but Dick was big and strong, and Teddie small and weak, so he had to succumb to his tyrant, who dragged him by one arm till he considered the danger was at an end.

.

An hour later all Mr. Grimshaw's guests were assembled hungry and expectant on the hills near Turbia. But where was the giver of the feast? Much surprise was expressed at his non-appearance; and the hungriest of his guests exhibited concern.

"Perhaps he has met with an accident," suggested Teddie, looking maliciously at Dick, who in return frowned threateningly.

"An accident!" repeated a fat old lady, with a severe cast of face; "but an accident is a very serious thing! When I was a young woman, it was not the fashion for young men to sit still and do nothing if they fancied their friends had met with an accident; they hastened to their assistance; but manners and

customs have changed for the worse since my young days."

Dick crimsoned to the roots of his hair, and avoided meeting Teddie's eyes, whose face beamed with ironical smiles. A little further off Madame Baremo and Miss Lizzie Black had ensconced themselves comfortably under some trees: in the far distance might be seen the retreating form of Mr. Lascelles, with his hands in his pockets, and his shoulders up to his ears; he had just said adieu to Miss Lizzie Black "this time for ever, remember. "There are certain things a man cannot forgive!"

"I guess he will come back when he has recovered his temper and feels hungry," said that young lady calmly, in answer to Madame Baremo's entreaties to "say a kind word to the poor boy".

"Well, now, I'm about famished!" at length remarked Miss Black, after a long silence, "and I guess that big dog is too; he has been prowling about behind those trees for the last ten minutes."

“It looks more like a wolf than a dog. I wonder what it wants!” replied Valérie.

The wolfish dog answered Madame Baremo’s remark before Miss Black had time to do it, by stealthily approaching an open hamper which had been half unpacked by a servant and left unprotected, and with many contortions of his ungainly body and savage snaps at imaginary enemies, he seized a joint of meat and made off with it: he knew he was a cur, and he knew he was a thief, for as he trotted away his tail no longer wagged like an honest dog’s, but he also knew that the food smelt good and that he was half starved, and his qualms of conscience disappeared altogether when he found himself in safety behind a ruined wall.

Valérie and Miss Black had watched this little episode in breathless silence.

“I am glad no one else saw it,” exclaimed that young lady, “you will not betray the poor beast?”

“Not for worlds,” replied Valérie fervently, “They would beat it.”

"They might *hang* it!" amended Miss Black; "now I guess that under temptation I should have done the same as the dog!"

"So should I!" agreed Valérie.

"I *hope* it will enjoy its dinner!" exclaimed Miss Black affectionately.

.

The guests grew hungrier and hungrier: the cloth was spread on the grass, and the servants had almost completed the arrangement of the various viands,—pies, cold chickens, mayonaises, langouste, salad, jellies, cakes; an appetising repast upon which longing eyes gazed hungrily, when round an angle of the plantation three figures appeared—one rested on a donkey's back, the other two walking; shamefaced, dejected, with tattered garments smeared with mud; while following closely came a brazen-faced and triumphant donkey led by a brown-legged imp, whose face expanded in a grin of delight, when he caught sight of the goodly feast spread out on the white tablecloth, thinking rightly that sooner or later a portion of it would fall to his share.

"Mr. Grimshaw!"

"Mrs. Paradise!"

"What *has* happened?"

"Have you *had* an accident?"

"Is anyone hurt?" &c., &c.

They were surrounded by sympathising friends, overwhelmed with questions, every one was eager to hear their story, and Mrs. Paradise became the heroine of the hour.

Miss Thring was quite overlooked.

"What a fuss about nothing!" she thought jealously; "I wonder which hurt the most! to glide gently, as it were, into the soft boughs of a tree, or to be thrown violently into the air, and to fall down with a crash on the hard stones! Ugh! *I* am the true victim, but real merit seldom meets with its reward! Ugh!"

As soon as the excitement had subsided a little, people had begun to remember once more that it was growing late, and they were hungry, and presently everybody was seated in comfortable and uncomfortable attitudes round the tablecloth.

Miss Lizzie Black, without being asked, had taken up her position on the left side of her host, principally because she saw Mr. Jack Lascelles in the distance slowly approaching, and she wished to punish him for his bad temper. Dick had already placed himself on the other side, so that when Jack arrived he was fain to take refuge with Miss Bang at the extreme end of the tablecloth, from whence he could only dart reproachful glances at Miss Black, who never once looked in his direction.

Under this arrangement Mr. Grimshaw felt that he was rewarded for his past martyrdom. He became radiant, and beamed paternally on all his guests.

“No, *don't* take that chicken, there is something you will like better, *much* better,” exclaimed Mr. Grimshaw, “something I ordered *especially* for you ; *pray* wait.”

Miss Lizzie Black turned her blue eyes inquiringly on the host, wondering what she *did* like better than chicken, and wondering still more how he had discovered her likes and dislikes.

Mr. Grimshaw, in the meantime, was gazing anxiously over the white expanse of tablecloth in search of something not visible. He summoned the head waiter, who was a German, and had been sent by the master of the hotel to superintend the arrangements.

"*Ou est il la ghigo frod ?*" demanded Mr. Grimshaw.

"*Gomment Monsieur ?*" said the man respectfully bending down to hear better.

"*La ghigo frod vous savoy que jai commandy.*"

"*Bardon Mousieur je ne gombrends bas,*" said the man with real concern, "*c'est un boisson que Monsieur demande ?*"

"*Jai demande la ghigo frod,*" repeated Mr. Grimshaw angrily, growing red even to the top of his bald head.

The waiter gazed nervously round the table, but remained silent.

"What was the good of sending a fellow who only understands German!" exclaimed Mr. Grimshaw. "What is the French for a sheep?" turning to Miss Black.

"*Brebis*," interposed Dick officiously, with a malicious smile on his face.

"*Mantenong comprenny*," said Mr Grimshaw, turning to the distressed waiter, who bent eagerly forward to listen.

"*On est il la ghigo-brebby—brebby-ghigo—comprenny ?*"

"*Ghigo-preppy—preppy-ghigo !*" repeated the man thoughtfully—then shaking his head to intimate that he did *not* understand, he hastened away in search of some one better informed than himself.

More of Mr. Grimshaw's guests were convulsed with laughter, which they endeavoured to turn off by abusing the "stupid waiter"; but Miss Black's eyes wandered anxiously in the direction of a ruined wall, when she was not exchanging significant glances with Madame Baremo, whose fair face was the colour of a red rose.

"I know where it is !" whispered Dick confidentially to Miss Black, "I saw the beggar take it."

"You are not to tell them," replied that young lady with authority.

"If I *don't*, will you walk back with me to the station this evening?" asked that audacious boy.

"Certainly not."

"Then I *will* tell, and little Grimshaw will have it shot."

"If you *do*," responded Miss Black severely, "I will immediately inform all the people present that you saw Mrs. Paradise kicked off her donkey, and so far from returning to help her, you ran away, dragging your friend with you in spite of his earnest entreaties to be allowed to return to her assistance."

"By jove, if I don't pitch into that little sneak Teddie, as soon as I have the chance!" muttered Dick revengefully.

Just then a French waiter stepped up to Mr. Grimshaw's side saying, "*Monsieur demande?*"

"*La ghigo*," replied that gentleman sulkily.

"*La gigot*," said the waiter with emphasis.

"*La ghigo*," repeated Mr. Grimshaw.

"A laig of motton," said the man triumphantly, "he was here—he is no longer. Person has him not seen. I am desolate": so saying the little waiter skipped away again.

"I am *very* sorry for the disappointment," said Mr. Grimshaw turning to Miss Lizzie Black, who looked at him in silent astonishment; "it was a little surprise I had prepared for you; if you remember I told you that I had been thinking of you all the morning."

"Yes."

"Perhaps you have forgotten telling me once, that *all* young ladies in America lived upon mutton, and that you especially had grown quite *thin* because you could so seldom get it on the Continent."

"Well," said Miss Black laughing merrily, and displaying her lovely, little, pearly teeth, "it was real kind of you to remember it, but *I guess I was only pulling your leg!*"

.

The pic-nic at length came to an end—the dinner part of it at least—and the brown-

legged donkey boy, watching eagerly in the distance, realised that his turn was coming.

Coffee was handed round, and gentlemen began to look for their cigar cases, and certain foreign ladies produced dainty receptacles for cigarettes. Two or three straight-laced English women, who made a point of being shocked at anything they had not been used to see in their own villages, prepared for immediate flight, lest their eyes should be offended by any worse breach of *les convenences*, and Mrs. Paradise, realising that the critical moment had at length arrived, joyfully opened the little black bag. Looking up and down the tablecloth with a bland smile, until the eyes of all the company were regarding her curiously, she drew from the bag a book, bound in crimson, with a miniature roulette table emblazoned in gold on one side of the cover, and on the other the figure of a man in an attitude of the deepest despair, with a woman weeping at his feet, holding a scroll in one hand, on which was printed in golden letters, "Pause! Gambler".

"Dear Christian Friends," said Mrs. Paradise,

addressing the astonished company, "when I received our amiable host's invitation to join his party, it occurred to me that it would be a delicate attention on my part to help him in a humble way to make the time pass agreeably to his guests. With this intention I brought a few books in my little bag ; some for distribution, and one," touching the book with the roulette table, "I propose, with the aid of my good friend, Miss Thring, to read aloud. It is a humble piece of literature—it pretends to be nothing but what it is—it was written under the influence of a strong emotion, and its title is—

"PAUSE ! GAMBLER."

A deep silence followed this announcement, the company apparently not knowing what to do, when Miss Lizzie Black, whose presence of mind rarely deserted her, exclaimed in her clear, slow enunciation, "I guess it is much the same as all the other systems, but it is real clever of you to have invented it. Does it require a large capital, Mrs. Paradise ?"

"A large capital !" repeated that bewildered



lady, for once put utterly out of countenance. "I don't, in the slightest degree, comprehend you."

"Well, I guess that my system is the best," answered Miss Black, good humouredly; "I put one piece on the red and another on the black, and no matter what comes up, I never lose."

Under cover of the merriment caused by this ingenious system, Mr. Grimshaw's guests with one accord hurried away from Mrs. Paradise's proximity, and that lady, finding her audience reduced to one person—Mr. Grimshaw alone, Miss Thring having joined in the general flight—was compelled to restore her literary efforts to the friendly shelter of the little black bag.

"What a dreadful *gurl*," exclaimed Mr. Grimshaw, who was bitterly offended with Miss Black, and no longer wished to make her his wife. "Perhaps I am too refined and fastidious myself, but I do hate vulgarity."

.
"What do we not owe you!" said Madame

Baremo gratefully, as they strolled through the plantation on to the open down. "But for you we should have been listening to that dreadful old woman's 'humble literature'. I have the greatest aversion to her, though I do not know her. I think it must be her white moustache and beard."

Presently they were joined by Mr. Jack Lascelles and René, and the former at once renewed hostilities with Lizzie Black, who nothing loth, began the quarrel where they had left off two hours previously.

"Let us leave them to settle their differences alone," said René. "I have just told Grimshaw that we are going to walk back to the station, instead of driving, so if you feel inclined I will take you a little further round the hill, and show you a garden I discovered a few days ago."

An hour's walk down hill through a pine wood, brought them to the entrance of the garden. It stood in a lovely position above the sea, sheltered from the north by olive terraces and pine trees. Flowers grew in

profusion everywhere, the ground was gemmed with violets, purple and white and pale grey, and patches of mignonette grew rank and wild in the garden beds amidst other fragrant flowers. Vine-covered terraces sloped down to the edge of the beach, the vine leaves half hidden by roses, red and white, all twined together in a wild tangle of loveliness. A little stream trickled down from the hills above, sparkling in the sunlight, and half-hidden here and there by maiden hair fern and wild periwinkle. "What a lovely spot!" exclaimed Valérie, when they sat down to rest under the shade of a clump of caronbas, after visiting every nook and corner.

"It is a nice sort of old place," replied René, "of course the house must be pulled down and a new one built on the same site, if we determine to buy it."

Valérie began to tie up in bunches the violets she had gathered, and René lying by her side on the grass grown terrace, smoked peacefully.

There was a soothing sound of sleepy waves

breaking monotonously on the pebbly shore, and stealing down through the pine wood came the fitful ting tang tang of the Turbia bells.

Yielding to a sudden impulse, Valérie bent over her husband and softly kissed his broad white brow. He looked up smiling, with lazy half-closed eyes.

"René," she said, "I am so very, very happy. I am sometimes quite frightened at the intensity of my happiness. I wonder what I have done to deserve it, and your love—for you *do* love me, don't you, René?"

"I expect I do, little goose," said René, with all an Englishman's shyness and reserve.

"How much, René?" said the girl anxiously.

"How much?" he repeated, laughing, "oh, quite enough I expect, more probably than you like"; then after a moment's silence, he added gravely, "better, my darling, than I have ever loved any living creature before—do you doubt it?"

"No," said the girl, with glistening eyes.

Half-an-hour later Valérie and René saun-

tered leisurely into the little station at Monaco, where they found Mr. Lascelles and Miss Lizzie Black waiting for them.

In the waiting room stood a lady, with a little girl by her side ; she had just arrived by the Nice train ; she was a remarkably handsome woman, and dressed to perfection.

When René appeared in the doorway she raised her magnificent brown eyes to his face, with a half smile and unmistakeable glance of recognition. He, too, started visibly, but passed on without speaking.

Valérie remarked the smile and the glance, and a jealous pang smote her heart.

“ What a lovely woman ! ” she remarked, as the door closed behind them.

“ Yes,” replied her husband, “ ten years ago she was supposed to be one of the loveliest women in Europe.”

“ You know her ? ” said Valérie, with a tremble in her voice.

“ I *did* know her ten years ago,” said René shortly.

Standing near was Mrs. Paradise with

another lady; they had driven from Turbia, and were returning to Nice by the same train as the Baremos, and Mrs. Paradise saw the glance of recognition, and heard the tremble in Valérie's voice, and divined in a moment the fatal jealousy lying dormant in the girl's nature.

"I see my way now!" thought Mrs. Paradise, as she seated herself in a first class carriage, and opened her note-book.

CHAPTER VII.

ANONYMOUS LETTERS.

ABOUT this time Miss Greville received an invitation to spend a week at San Remo with her friend Mrs. Hetherington. The week extended to a fortnight, and then another week was added on to the previous ones, so that when Miss Greville returned to Nice, she found people beginning to make plans for their summer tours as soon as the Carnival, which fell unusually late, should be over. The first acquaintance she met on her arrival late one afternoon was Mrs. Norreys, who hospitably invited her to her own sitting room, and gave her some tea, while Parker was engaged in inspecting her mistress's things and putting those finishing touches to the rooms which a chamber-maid is so certain to neglect.

Mrs. Norreys was, as usual, entertaining and full of anecdotes about her friends and their eccentricities, and the coming *mi-carême* fêtes, which included a ball given by an English peeress of some notoriety.

"And how are the Baremos?" at length inquired Miss Greville, who was growing weary of her friend's anecdotes of people about whom she knew nothing, and cared less.

"Monsieur Baremo is playing very high, and recklessly, both here and at Monaco. Every one is talking about his losses, the poor man does not seem to have any luck at all," replied Mrs. Norreys, "and you remember what a model couple we always considered them, so devoted, and so on; well, now they are scarcely ever seen together. He goes every day to Monte Carlo; very frequently travelling in the same carriage with my husband, who also goes every day to play a system—an infallible one, of course," she added, laughing.

"And what becomes of Madame Baremo?" asked Miss Greville, looking as she felt, ex-

tremely startled, at this description of the Baremo's ménage.

"She spends nearly her whole time with rather a fast friend, who has lately come to the Hotel de R——, a Madame de M——, a pretty fashionable looking woman, who dresses to perfection, and flirts equally well, from all I hear."

"And Madame Baremo spends all her time with this lady!" repeated Miss Greville uneasily, "a former friend, no doubt".

"I should imagine so, they are too intimate to be recent acquaintances," replied Mrs. Norreys, carelessly; "but," she added, "Madame Baremo is looking exceedingly ill, every one remarks how changed she is!"

And all this has come about in the last few weeks, reflected Miss Greville when she found herself alone in her own room. Could it have anything to do with his gambling?

Several days passed before Miss Greville saw anything of Madame Baremo beyond a passing smile of recognition when they met accidentally; in fact, she began to fancy that

Valérie was trying to avoid any lengthened interviews, and of Monsieur Baremo she saw nothing at all ; but one afternoon, she heard a gentle knock at her door, and Madame Baremo's voice asking for admittance.

“ Dear Miss Greville, I have not seen you for ages, and I am afraid you must have put it down to heartlessness on my part, but my time has been so entirely occupied of late, that I have not had a moment to myself,” and then they began to talk about Mrs. Hetherington and her numerous family, and the dulness of San Remo, and so on ; but on Valérie's part the conversation was sustained with such evident weariness, that at length Miss Greville inquired if she was not ill or even fatigued.

“ Yes, I always am more or less tired and ill,” said Valérie, sadly. “ I do not think the climate suits me—but I hope we shall not be here much longer, at least,” she added, correcting herself, “ I suppose not ; and that reminds me, that I came to ask you to go with us to a pic-nic to-morrow, if the weather is fine—

oh, please do not refuse!" as Miss Greville showed symptoms of hesitation.

Pic-nics were not much in that lady's line, even when combined with the brilliant sunshine of the Riviera, and the tolerable certainty that the day would not end with a violent thunder-storm—but when she caught sight of Valérie's pretty pleading face, she at once accepted the invitation.

"I would have given you longer notice," said Madame Baremo, "had I known myself, but René and some friends proposed to get up an impromptu pic-nic to-morrow, at a place called Briqueboule's Bay, somewhere on the Mentone side, and I was only too glad to keep him from ——" she paused, hesitated, and continued hurriedly, "in short it is as good a means of getting through the time as any other."

"Are you so very tired of Nice?" asked Miss Greville, compassionately.

"I am very tired of Monaco," answered the girl bitterly, her face flushing painfully, as she avoided meeting Miss Greville's eyes, "tired beyond measure".

There was a long awkward silence—which Valérie was the first to break.

“Miss Greville,” she said abruptly. “Why do men like the society of the—the—*odd* people one sees at Monaco; married men more especially?” with a little short unpleasant laugh.

“What people do you mean?” asked Miss Greville.

“You do not meet them in society, you know, they have mostly done something *odd*, and one only hears of them at Monte Carlo,” said Valérie innocently.

Now this question was an embarrassing one in every way, for one reason, because Miss Greville was not certain whether the individuals described by Madame Baremo as “odd” belonged to the masculine or feminine gender; and, moreover, her own acquaintance with persons, male or female, beyond the pale of society was of such a limited nature, that she scarcely knew how to reply.

“I mean,” repeated Valérie impatiently, two angry red spots burning on her cheeks,

"ladies who powder, paint, wear diamonds in the morning, and talk loudly to men indiscriminately, more especially married ones."

At length Miss Greville was made to comprehend.

"But," she said, "I do not think married men as a rule prefer the society of the class you describe; one can understand very young men thinking them good fun, or very old ones whose intellects are on the wane, and whether the admiration be sincere or not, it can be guaged by the horror all men express if they imagine their sisters or daughters wish to resemble such people either in dress or manners."

"In that case they put their wives in another category," replied Valérie bitterly, "any woman who does not wilfully blind herself, must learn sooner or later that the real attraction of Monaco lies in the society of those women and not in the play."

At this astounding assertion Miss Greville could not refrain from a smile of incredulity. "My dear, I think there are many poor women on this Riviera who would gladly

believe what you have just now asserted, but I fear it is just the reverse ; the attraction of these silly frivolous ladies is very ephemeral, but when the fatal passion for gambling once takes possession of a person it never leaves him again until the means of indulging it has failed by his total ruin."

"Oh, of course, it is very foolish, every one is aware of it, but most people do it all the same," said Madame Baremo with sublime indifference, "but no one in her senses would say she preferred the one thing to the other," she added rather incoherently, the bright crimson flush dying her face again.

"Well," said Miss Greville, displaying an old maid's want of perception, "since happily for ourselves we are not likely to cross the paths of the married men to whom you allude, it matters very little whether I or you are right."

"Yes," said Valérie, "and in any case Monaco is an admirable excuse, and bears the brunt of many crimes."

"I think public gambling places are in-

finitely preferable to private ones, because in the case of the one you must have the money to put down which happily is not always available, but take for instance the circle."

"I prefer the circle—high play or not," interrupted Valérie hotly, "because from that at least women are excluded," and then glancing at Miss Greville's grave and perplexed visage, poor Valérie tried to laugh at her own vehemence; but her friend could not fail to see that tears were much nearer the surface, and her kind heart ached for this first grief of a very young wife, unreasonable though it was in all probability.

She was far however from suspecting the real state of the case. Had she seen more clearly, much of the evil that followed might perhaps have been averted; but alas, how often does the cry go up to heaven from poor tortured souls, "If I had only known! only known before it was too late!" and so the world goes on! we have not the gift of prevision, mercifully some people say, and thus in our blindness we stumble on to the very

brink of the precipice, only realising how near it is when we fall into the abyss below, shattered or maimed for life. And so on that sunny afternoon Miss Greville thought Madame Baremo was dealing in generalities, when, poor child, her petulance arose from sorrow. She was so young, and so unused to suffering in silence, and yet too shy to speak out as an older person might have done. She could only hint at the misery consuming her, and Miss Greville, not understanding, allowed her to go away un comforted.

"I must say good-bye," said Valérie, "I have an engagement at," but before she could finish the sentence M. Baremo's voice was heard at the door asking for admittance.

"I knocked three times," he explained, "but you did not answer, so as I knew my wife was here asking you to go to Briqueboulé's Bay, I thought I might venture to come in."

"You must really excuse me," said Madame Baremo to Miss Greville. "I promised to drive with Madame de M—— at three o'clock,

and I am already late, so I will leave you and René together."

"I wanted you to go with me to Monaco by the next train, Valérie," said her husband ; "throw over Madame de M—— and lay the blame on me."

"No, it is impossible," but Valérie's lip quivered and her eyes filled with tears, as she turned away abruptly and hastened to the door.

What would she not have given to be friends once more, and to go with him wherever he went, happy and amused so long as they were together ? But the recollection of a certain letter, safely locked up in her desk, rose up before her, and hardened her heart against the husband, who was still as a god to her. Strange inconsistency of a woman's nature ! Who can explain it ?

An ugly scowl gathered on Monsieur Baremo's good looking face, as his wife left the room ; and Miss Greville glancing at him furtively, realised the probable truth of all the alarming stories his cousin, Mrs. Hetherington,

had delighted in telling her about his violent, uncontrollable temper.

“You have only seen him on his fair weather days probably, but *I* have seen him in a perfect storm of anger under opposition, however trifling, and I assure you it left a most uncomfortable impression on my mind.”

So when Miss Greville saw the scowl deepening on her visitor's brow, and feeling uncertain how much provocation was required to move him to uncontrollable wrath, the poor lady quaked, and began hurriedly to converse on some trivial subject, in the hope of diverting his thoughts into another channel.

Her feeble efforts were not crowned with success; the unamiable frown remained, and the sound of departing wheels, and the sight of his wife and another lady talking with animation as the carriage disappeared, did not tend to soothe the indignant husband's feelings.

So he watched the carriage until it was out of sight, and then turning with a grim attempt at good humour, to Miss Greville, remarked,

"I cannot imagine why my wife has taken such a dislike to Monaco during the last few weeks. Do you remember how she used to admire it? Well, now, she looks terror-stricken when the place is mentioned, and so I am obliged to leave her almost entirely to her own resources, which I dislike doing extremely."

Monsieur Baremo spoke as if he considered his daily visits to Monte Carlo a solemn duty. Miss Greville not knowing what reply to make, remained silent.

After a long pause, Monsieur Baremo continued.

"You are such an old and dear friend of my mother's family, that I think you will forgive me, if I ask your advice on a subject which is causing me great perplexity."

The frightened lady, nodded a feeble acquiescence, resolving inwardly that nothing should induce her to differ from him, however great the provocation, lest in his wrath he should loose all control over himself, and make her an unwilling spectator of one of those storms of anger so much deprecated by Mrs. Hetherington.

"I am unused to women," he began eagerly, "and most of them who are worth anything require delicate handling, and women understand one another's ways so much better, don't you know? Well, to come to the point, I'll be hanged if I can make out what is amiss with my wife; her nature seems to have changed in the last month or so; she avoids me, and is almost completely silent when we are alone; and yet she has one of the sweetest dispositions in the world! Upon my soul, I don't know what to do; but it is hard work, I can assure you."

Monsieur Baremo sighed heavily, and began to stride up and down the room, like an irritable wild beast in a narrow cage. "It is safer not to speak until I am obliged," thought Miss Greville.

Apparently M. Baremo did not expect any response from his hostess, for he continued,

"I am a good deal put out by a letter I received a few weeks ago; it is unsigned, therefore I can take no notice of it, and like all anonymous communications, it would be be-

neath contempt if there was not a certain grain of truth in it. What brutes there are in the world!" he exclaimed, in sudden wrath. "To continue; the writer accuses my dear little wife of having given a large sum of money to a well-known gambler, proving thereby that she is on terms of great intimacy with him—of which, of course, according to the 'anonymous' mind, I am in ignorance. The whole thing when explained is simple enough, and I have only myself to thank for it. But although this is plain enough to anyone who knows the facts of the case, the devil of it is, how to stop the story from getting abroad. You know how a lie spreads, and how glad people—other women—are to injure the reputation of a pretty charming woman like my wife. Well, the real state of the case is this. One day I had won a great deal of money at trente-et quarante, and as my wife was returning to Nice with some friends by an earlier train than myself, I gave it to her to keep; after she had left the Casino, I began to lose, and fearing I should

run short of money, and wishing to watch the game—there is a great deal more than you imagine in that.”

“Yes, of course,” said Miss Greville politely.

“I asked young W——, to drive to the Monaco station, from whence my wife intended to start, and beg her to give him back my money. It appears that at first she hesitated, but after a good deal of persuasion, gave him the whole, which he brought back in triumph—young idiot—for I lost it all. The writer of the letter gave the date when this occurred, to carry truth on the face of the accusation, I suppose, but fortunately this exactness enabled me to refer to my note-book, and thereby establish the truth of my own belief. Do you see how a mere trifle like this may, in the hands of evil-minded people, cause my wife endless annoyance?”

“I do, indeed,” said Miss Greville, gravely.

“I must get at the truth of it somehow, and by heaven, I will make the writer of it pay dearly for it; and I look to you to tell

me if you hear any one repeat this story about my wife?"

"Of course, I promise to do so, and, if I can with any certainty find out who wrote the letter, you may be sure she will not receive much mercy at my hands."

"You think it is a woman?" said M. Baremo.

"I think *most* men would be incapable of such baseness, but one can never tell," was the evasive reply.

"What a confounded idiot I was to send another man on such an errand, knowing as I do the sort of low-minded third-class people who hang about these foreign watering places."

"It was a great pity," agreed Miss Greville; and then forgetting her previous resolutions, she continued boldly. "Why do you not persuade Madame Baremo to tell you what is really on her mind? It is probably something more than the natural sorrow she feels at your gambling."

Before the sentence was finished Miss Greville saw the mistake she had made.

"Confound the natural sorrow," said M.

Baremo, his swarthy complexion reddening with anger. "When a man is a gambler, he will remain one to the end of his days. I have made no secret of my passion for play, and if she was not 'sorry'"—with sneering emphasis—"why the—the—why should she begin to be so now? She will gain nothing by it, except to madden me beyond my strength to bear. Good God, if my pretty gentle wife should develop into a whining complaining woman, always irritating me with her religious scruples, and turning my whole life into a long howl of reproof and despair!"

René threw back his indignant head, with a jerk peculiar to himself, and began to walk faster than ever, from one end of the room to the other, his angry black eyes gleaming with suppressed wrath.

"It is a great misfortune," repeated Miss Greville, with the stupidity of extreme fright.

"What is a great misfortune?" inquired M. Baremo, stopping exactly in front of her chair, and glaring down at her in a way that

might have shaken any maiden lady's courage, unused to the eccentricities of the sterner sex.

"A passion for gambling!" she murmured, in a feeble failing voice.

"Ha! ha! always the same cry! and I took you for a sensible woman, Miss Greville. Merciful heaven! what—what—*odd* people there are in the world. Ha! ha! ha! by—Jove."

Impossible to render the withering contempt conveyed in the last exclamation; but it had the effect of rousing Miss Greville's temper also, principally because she felt certain that M. Baremo had been on the very point of calling her a fool—instead of the comparatively mild hint, that he included her amongst the odd people of the earth. So, with her small blue eyes glaring back at the large black ones severely regarding her, she retorted.

"Even at the risk of forfeiting your good opinion, which of course I value highly, I must again repeat that I consider gambling a great misfortune."

"So let it be!" replied M. Baremo moodily, suddenly changing like most over-excitables

people from one extreme to another. "It is the deuce and all when one loses, as I have done lately, and when I come home dead beat, instead of finding my wife cheerful, and glad to see me, she sits in utter silence, and thus drives me back to the Club for companionship when often I should be glad to stay quietly at home."

Miss Greville made no reply, for how could she point out to this wrong-headed man, that there were two sides to the question, and supposing his wife displayed a want of tact in resenting his neglect of her—it was not an unreasonable fault in so young and inexperienced a woman.

"And now, before I go," said M. Baremo, "I must apologise for having inflicted all this egotistical talk upon you. It is extremely good of you to have listened so patiently to me."

"M. Baremo," said Miss Greville with the courage of desperation. "I *must* set you right upon one point before you go, in case anything I have said might have misled you. I do not believe Madame Baremo resents your

love of gambling in the slightest degree. I think she has something else on her mind—nay—I am sure of it.”

“I am sure I do not know what it can be,” he replied, “I never refuse her any request she likes to make.”

“Perhaps if you were more with her.”

“So I shall be, when we leave this part of the world, but for the moment I must work hard, and try to recoup myself for my past losses.”

“But if you continue to lose?”

“Oh, nonsense!” he replied good humoredly, “I am *sure* to win. I must play more carefully—it all depends on one’s play, you know, and I must pull myself together, and go in for a heavy stake—for if I continue to play as carelessly as I have done for some days past, it—well, it does not bear thinking of—that is all; but I feel quite sure of myself.”

Miss Greville burned to give him a little of the good advice she felt trembling on her lips; but she knew too surely that she might as well talk to the blustering mistral, or the

Mediterranean during the Equinoctial gales, as to a gambler bent on his own destruction.

Perhaps M. Baremo divined what was passing through her mind, or perhaps his innate good breeding made him anxious to atone for his past *brusquerie*, for as they shook hands, he repeated,

"It is doubly kind of you to have listened so patiently to me, because like all other sensible people you think me little short of a madman".

"No—not exactly—only when people have enough to live upon, it does seem a pity to run the risk of losing it."

"No one *has* enough to live upon, as far as I can see," said M. Baremo laughing, "and once a gambler, always one, which is perhaps the most honest way of putting it. Good-bye, Miss Greville—*au revoir*—don't forget the pic-nic to-morrow, because the day after I am going to *faire sauter* the bank seven times running—so you need not shake your head, and look incredulous." And that was how Miss Dorothy Greville and M. Baremo parted.

As the door closed behind him, Miss Greville walked to the window, and looked out. Heavy clouds were gathering on the horizon across the sea, a sure sign in the winter of bad weather.


"It will rain to-morrow," she said reflectively, "and there is much about the same probability of the proposed pic-nic taking place, as there is of M. Baremo breaking the bank seven times running! Thank heaven I never married!" said Miss Greville piously, as she settled herself comfortably in her favourite arm-chair, and proceeded to open the *Times*.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHITE CYCLAMEN.

AFTER Madame Baremo had taken leave of Miss Greville, instead of fulfilling his original intention of going to Monaco, he turned his steps westward and started for a long walk into the country.

He felt the need of a few hours' reflection, for in spite of his determination to look on the bright idea of things, he could not stifle a growing dread that his bad luck might possibly continue longer than he could hold out; for though not actually ruined, he was trembling on the brink of it, and unless he could bring himself to renounce play of every description, not to-morrow or the day after, or in ten days' time, but then, from that very moment, to give it up utterly and entirely, he would find himself and his wife paupers,



without a sou they could call their own, dependent as long as she lived on Madame de Mirecourt's charity.

"Oh, the bitterness of such a position!" René exclaimed mentally, for to say that he hated his mother-in-law would lightly express the aversion he cherished in secret for that lady.

René was an intensely proud man, and Madame de Mirecourt had touched his pride to the quick by reminding him on more than one occasion that he had married an heiress, and having so small a fortune of his own, he ought rather to consider himself the steward, rather than the husband, in the administration of her daughter's affairs.

So Valérie, sympathising intensely with her husband, separated herself completely from her mother, lest the same insults should be repeated.

What a disastrous ending to all his fine projects of buying land and building a house!

"I am afraid it will be a great disappointment to Valérie," he thought, "though she does seem

for the moment to have cooled in her affection for Monaco."

He did not say it was a disappointment to himself, because he was perfectly aware, though he scarcely admitted it, that he had only made the house an excuse for indulging in a passion, the strength of which had completely mastered him body and soul.

"What a fool I have been! what a fool! what a fool!" he exclaimed in the bitterness of his heart. Then suddenly like a ray of sunlight the recollection of his wife stole across the gloom of the future.

"After all," he thought, "we shall only have to economise for a few years and then my affairs will come round again, no great hardship with such a cheery bright companion as my lovely little wife. I am so sure she will not grumble or reproach me, or have her mother at my head, after the manner of some men's wives. Poor devils, how I pity them! I daresay that foolish kind-hearted old lady is right, Valérie thinks I have neglected her, and is too proud to complain, but I will set all that to rights when I get home, and the day after to-morrow

we will turn our backs on Monaco, Nice, and all places where gamblers do resort."

So feeling much relieved that the matter was settled, René began to whistle like a very school-boy. He had unconsciously turned aside into a lane leading up to a dense grove of olive trees, where the road was newly made, with high banks on either side, which quite shut out the view. The road grew steeper at every step, and at length a sharp turn to the right brought him to some iron gates, and the end of the lane. He looked through them and found that his footsteps had brought him to the cemetery, an obsequious guardian threw open the gates and invited him to enter.

"No, thank you, my friend," he said in English, "this sort of place is not much in my line, time enough when I am brought here, and can't help myself."

The man not understanding muttered something in *patois*, but his little child running out, held up a blossom of white cyclamen, which René put in his button hole.

"Rather a melancholy abode, '*la dernière maison de tout-le-monde*,'" thought M. Baremo

carelessly, as he strode down the hill on his way home.

Just as he was entering the door of his hotel, a friend hailed him, coming up breathlessly, and exclaiming in accents of reproach and astonishment,

"Why, Baremo, you don't mean to say that you were not at Monaco to-day? or," glancing at his dusty boots, "perhaps you have walked back from Ville Franche?"

"No," answered René, shortly, "I did not go."

"What a pity!" exclaimed his friend in a tone of the deepest sympathy.

"Why, what's happened?" enquired René.
 "Excuse me, my dear fellow, but your eyes are nearly starting out of your head. I am all curiosity to hear the news!"

"Well, the news is just this, I went to the station to meet a friend, and who should put his head out of one of the carriage windows but D——."

"I am going as far as M——," he explained

“to see young R—— safe on his way to England, he is not fit to be trusted alone.”

“Why, has he gone mad?” I naturally asked.

“Pretty nearly,” said D——, “the effect of too much joy.”

“Has some one left him a fortune?”

“Not precisely,” said D——, “but something like it. You know he was completely cleaned out, could not pay his hotel bill, and naturally was unable to return to his native country and justly indignant relatives; he was hanging about the casino in the last stage of despair, when a compassionate friend lent him a louis. The young beggar took it into the rooms, and in less than an hour he had won one hundred and seventy thousand francs. What do you say to that?”

“The devil he did!” exclaimed René, excitedly.

“Yes, but the best part of the whole, or the worst part for you, is to come,” said his friend.

“And how do you think he won it?” said

D——. “Why, playing on Baremo’s numbers at roulette, they kept coming out the whole afternoon, long after we had dragged young R—— away from the tables, lest he should make a fool of himself, and now,” continued the friend, “you can understand why I was so horrified to see you here at Nice, for I had not time to ask D—— about you, because the train moved off before he had finished relating R——’s exploits.”

“The devil!” repeated René, with an angry gleam in his eyes, as he slowly and thoughtfully ascended the stairs to his own rooms. “It is exactly like my infernal luck! I will cut the place for ever the day after to-morrow.”

Madame Baremo had only returned from her drive a few minutes when her husband entered the room. She was standing at one of the windows of the *salon* moodily looking at the garden below.

Her drive had not been a pleasant one in any sense of the word: for she started with the knowledge that she would far, far sooner be

sitting by René's side in the dusty train ; and the recollection of her cold abrupt refusal to accompany him weighed heavily on her conscience. Her companion was as lively and amusing as ever, the scenery delightful, and the weather all that could be desired, but Valérie leaned back in her corner, and replied in monosyllables to Madame de M——'s remarks, until the latter was fain to take refuge in silence too, inwardly making a vow that she would not ask Valérie to drive with her again as long as she continued *distracte* and moody as she had been of late.

" I am tired of these long country drives," said Madame de M—— pettishly. " I don't care for scenery, and I know the Riviera by heart ; if you have no objection, my dear Valérie, I think we will drive where we can see our fellow-creatures."

" With all my heart," replied Madame Baremo indifferently, so the horses' heads were turned Nice-wards, and soon they found themselves amidst the throng of people and carriages on the *Promenade des Anglais*. For some

time Madama de M—— was fully occupied in recognising her numerous acquaintance and making satirical remarks on the various dresses and their wearers, and even Valérie was roused into something like interest as she listened to her friend's witty observations.

All at once Madame de M—— said eagerly, "Did you remark that lovely woman driving herself in a Victoria, with a little girl by her side?"

Valérie bent forward and immediately recognised the figure and dress of the lady with the magnificent brown eyes and golden hair, whom René had once told her was the loveliest woman he had ever seen.

A spasm of jealousy contracted poor Valérie's heart, as she inquired in a faint voice the name of her unknown rival.

"She is the Princesse de C——," said Madame de M——, "and ten years ago turned the heads of half the young men in Europe. Is it possible, *ma belle*, that you did not know her name?" inquired Madame de M—— du-

biously, while rather an unpleasant smile played round the corner of her lips.

“I am quite sure I did not know her name,” said Valérie coldly, “and now that you have told me what it is, I cannot pretend that it conveys much information to my mind.”

“That is because you are so young,” retorted her friend impatiently, “and your mother was so strict about the people you met, and Madame de C—— was not exactly of the same *monde* as Madame de Mirecourt,” she added with a slight laugh. “However she is received everywhere, and whatever *did* take place between her husband and herself was hushed up at the time, and is now forgotten.”

“She has a husband?” said Valérie, with a sensation of relief.

“Yes, but they are separated; he makes her a princely allowance, and she is permitted to have her child with her for six months every year. She ought to be satisfied, for she cares more for money than for anything else in the world, as M. Baremo could tell you,” said

Madame de M——, with the same curious smile as before.

“M. Baremo,” exclaimed Valérie, growing scarlet, “my husband!”

“Yes, *ma belle*, your husband!” said Madame de M——, laughing affectedly. “Have you never heard that touching little episode in the life of the Marquis Baremo?”

“If I have,” replied Valérie, with admirable coolness, which, however, did not in the least deceive her tormentor, “it has quite gone out of my head; what was the episode to which you allude?”

“Only that ten years ago when Claire de la Roche was a girl of nineteen, your husband fell madly in love with her, but with a madness past description, he followed her from one country to another, and people declared that unless she accepted him, her life or his would be the penalty. But Claire, who was the most mercenary heartless coquette, knew how to take care of herself, and her engagement to the old Prince de C——, was announced, and M. Baremo, after disappearing

from society's haunts for a year or two, eventually re-appeared again as a *joueur effréné*, which rôle he has continued to carry out ever since, more's the pity for you, *ma toute belle*. There look to your right, she is coming again," said Madame de M——, "is she not lovely still?"

Valérie gave a hasty glance at the occupant of the Victoria, who returned it by an impertinent stare.

"Very lovely," said Valérie, "she has such fine eyes."

An hour later, Valérie was standing at the window of her drawing-room, thinking with something akin to despair of this new light thrown upon her husband's past life, when the door opened and he walked into the room, dusty and smiling.

"Well, my Valérie, so you see I did not go to Monaco," he said. "I went into the country for a stretch, and feel all the better for it; a sedentary life does not agree with me."

"No?" said Valérie in an icy voice.

"Had you a pleasant drive?" asked René, good temperedly.

"Very, thank you," was the mendacious reply.

"Don't thank me, darling," said René laughing at his wife's elaborate politeness, "but come and tell me why you are so angry, what have I done to offend you?"

Valérie hesitated, she was still almost a child in some things, and the temptation was almost irresistible to go and throw her arms round René's neck, and vow then and there to forgive the past, whatever it might have been—and love him better than ever in the future. She hesitated, glancing first at her husband laughing, and it must be confessed, far from penitent eyes; and then through the open window into the garden below, and while she hesitated, the Princess de C——, drove slowly in through the open gates, and stopped in front of the hotel.

"That explains why he did not go to Monaco to-day," thought Valérie, with the unreasonable bitterness of a jealous woman.

“Well, my Valérie, are you coming to be forgiven for all the wicked temper you have displayed of late,” said René, looking first at his wife, and then at his own dusty boots, “or shall I retire to my own room, and make myself presentable, before *I* prostrate myself at *your* feet, and ask your forgiveness for my sins of omission during the past weeks spent at Monte Carlo.”

“I do not think it is worth while to insult me more deeply than you have done already, by making a joke of what most men would at least refrain from mentioning,” replied Valérie crimsoning with anger.

“I don’t precisely know to what you allude,” said René, growing angry also at the unmistakable sneer in his wife’s tone, “I am not aware of having ‘insulted’ you, either intentionally or otherwise, but if that is the view you take of my conduct, there is nothing more to be said,” he said, standing up, while the scowl Miss Greville deprecated so much, became alarmingly visible on his broad white brow.

Valérie was too fond of her husband to be afraid of him, besides he had ever treated her with the greatest gentleness and affection.

"You know perfectly well what I mean, and it is hardly worth while to pretend to be unconscious of what has been evident to all the world for a long time past. I was the last to discover it, but it is impossible to deceive even me any longer."

"Discovered *what*? Have you taken leave of your senses, Valérie? I assure you, on my word of honour, that I have not the faintest idea what you mean."

But Valérie, gathering up her parasol and gloves, went into her own room and shut the door. She had just seen the Princess de C—— enter the hotel, and in her hand she carried a magnificent bouquet of white and purple cyclamen, and glancing at René she saw that he also wore a white cyclamen in his button hole.

"You are a deuced disagreeable little woman," shouted René through the door, quite unaware of the reason of his wife's sudden departure, "and I shall go and dine


at the Club ; perhaps when I return you will be in a pleasanter frame of mind." As he finished speaking, a servant brought some letters and papers, which he laid on the table and retired. All the letters but one were for Madame Baremo, and the one addressed to himself was in his mother-in-law's hand-writing. He opened it with a shrug of impatience, but as he read on, the hot blood mounted to his forehead, then dying away left him as white as ashes—once, twice, he read it through from beginning to end.

"So that is the meaning of it!" he muttered. "My God, what a dupe I have been ! I could have sworn she was as true-hearted and guileless as a child. It appears that it is impossible for any woman to love me for more than a few weeks," said René, hastily thrusting the letter away, and going into his own room. Then he locked the door behind him, and bending his head down on his folded arms, sobbed like a child, for the loss of his young wife's love, which had grown more precious than his own life to him.

.

It was midnight. All the clocks in the neighbourhood had struck, or chimed, or tinkled twelve; and Miss Dorothy Greville had just returned from an evening party. She was not as a rule a dissipated old lady, but on this particular night she had undoubtedly stayed out later than usual. The wind moaned drearily through all the chinks and crannies and key-holes, and the rain beat heavily against the window panes, for Parker, whose mind at present was occupied with higher things than the mere observance of her duties, had neglected to close the outside shutters. There was a steady rumble in the street below of carriages returning from the station, bringing back to their respective houses and hotels the last importation of Monaco gamblers.

Miss Greville having dismissed her maid and donned her dressing-gown, sat down before a blazing fire to read her usual chapter before retiring to rest. While thus engaged, she heard a faint knock at the outer door, and



thinking it was Parker who had returned to fetch something she had forgotten, said "come in," without looking up from her book.

To her surprise she heard Madame Baremo's voice murmuring excuses, and asking if she could speak to Miss Greville for two minutes.

"My dear Madame Baremo, what is the matter?" exclaimed the astonished old lady as she hastened to admit her midnight visitor.

"Oh nothing, at least I hope not," answered Valérie in an agitated voice, shivering as if she had an attack of ague, "but when I heard your carriage, I thought it was René, and when I saw you coming upstairs I thought perhaps you would let me speak to you, the time seemed so long."


"Have you no fire?" said Miss Greville taking the poor child's hand, which was as cold as ice; and drawing an arm chair close to the blazing wood fire, she made Valérie sit down and warm her frozen hands and feet.

For the last five hours Madame Baremo had been sitting in her own room, fireless,

candleless, and dinnerless, crying like the child she was, and hugging at intervals René's dusty home-spun jacket, in the button hole of which garment, still remained the offending cyclamen, much crushed, and wet with tears, but even in death shedding around its faint sweet odour.

When Valérie heard René leave his room, she watched jealously from her window to see if he really went to the club, or remained in the hotel; in which case she reasoned with admirable logic that of course he was going to spend the evening with Princesse de C——, whose Victoria had been driven away by a servant, but when she saw him jump into a cab, and heard him tell the man where to drive, she was overpowered with remorse, and stole into his room, as she had often done before during his absence, to comfort herself with the sight of his things since she could not see him.

Very foolish! very childish! but there are such women in the world, and their usual destiny is a broken heart.



So Valérie, seeing René's coat thrown carelessly across a chair, carried it away to her own room, and kissed it affectionately, and wept tears of penitence over it. He evidently does not value the flower, she thought, and after all why should Madame de C—— have given it to him, because she happened to have a bouquet of cyclamen; it can be bought in every flower shop in Nice, and she tried to believe it. And René's servant, Maurice, coming into his master's room to arrange it for the night, missed the home spun jacket and looked for it anxiously, for, he said to himself with a comical gesture, if M. le Marquis in a fit of absence has put on his evening coat without taking off the morning one, I shall have to pay for it to-morrow morning.

.
The warmth of the fire brought back the colour into Valérie's pale face, and for a few minutes she allowed Miss Greville to make her comfortable with cushions and a warm shawl without making any remark; then all at once she murmured, "I wonder why you are so

very kind to me," and covering her face with her hands she burst into an agony of tears.

For some time Miss Greville allowed this violent grief to have its way, but by degrees she saw that Valérie was becoming hysterical, so laying her hand gently on the poor child's arm she said,

"Now, my dear, try to calm yourself, and if you like, tell me what is the matter, but do just as you think best. I know when I was young I used to cry sometimes for nothing at all, and I daresay it is the same with you now; you are tired and cold and ought to be in bed," added the old lady realising for the first time Valérie's condition, "it is very wrong, nay dangerous, to give way to such violent grief; am I not right?"

"Yes," sobbed Valérie, "and at first I was glad, but now I do not much care what happens."

"Pray hush, my dear," said Miss Greville, "if you do not care yourself, you should consider your husband."

"It will be all the better for him, if I

and the child die together," replied Valérie sadly.

"Madame Baremo, I think you have taken some very foolish fancy into your head about M. Baremo; you must forgive an old woman for speaking so frankly, my only object can of course be your welfare."

"Oh, indeed it is very good of you. I have no one to consult, and I have not had much experience, and yet I have tried to act for the best, in refusing to go with René to that wicked place."

"You mean you hoped it might keep him from gambling?"

"From gambling!" replied Valérie in such a tone of contempt, that Miss Greville felt quite abashed.

"Do you, can you imagine that I am so selfish as to wish to deprive him of the only amusement he has in this dull place? Even supposing he lost every *sou* we have in the world, and could be happy to live with me in poverty, I should not regret the money for one single moment—and if, as people din into

my ears, that it is wicked to gamble, I am very sorry of course, but it does not make me angry with my husband."

"Then what on earth is it?" asked the astonished lady.

Valérie hesitated. "He does not go to Monaco for *that*"—she said at length, "and it drives me wild with resentment. I did not know *who* it was till to-day—though the letter—a letter I received, said that there was some one—but to-day I saw her—and I am not surprised any longer. I do not blame him, he knew her long ago, and liked her, and she is so much—much better looking than *me*," said Valérie, with a fresh burst of tears.

"My dear Madame Baremo, what can have put such a wild idea into your head?" said Miss Greville, as the real truth broke upon her hitherto benighted senses, in all its doleful absurdity. "You do not really suspect your husband of such treachery?"

"I do not suspect—I *know*," she answered drearily, "because since that letter came, I have watched him, and he is always restless

and out of spirits, until the time comes to go to Monte Carlo, and then he is so odd about the letters. He used formerly to give me his to read, or when he was lazy make me open them for him, but of late he has carefully examined all the letters—even mine, before he would allow me to look at them, and—and oh, I know too well that it is all over.”

“You mentioned a letter you had received,” said Miss Greville thoughtfully, “was it anonymous?”

“Yes, there was no signature, but why do you ask? what do you know about it?” inquired Valérie anxiously.

Right or wrong, Miss Greville, usually so cautious, could not resist the temptation of telling Valérie that M. Baremo had also received an anonymous letter, and intended and hoped to find out the writer of the same. “He did not mention it to you,” continued Miss Greville, “for fear of annoying you, but it is evident that you are the victims of some malicious plot, which sooner or later will be brought to light, I trust.”

“But what is the meaning of it?” said Valérie, looking at Miss Greville with her innocent grey eyes. “How can we have offended any one?”

“I will leave M. Baremo to tell you to-morrow,” said Miss Greville cheerfully; “every thing will come right before long, you may be quite certain, and you will understand how grievously you have injured him by your suspicions.”

“Will he forgive me, do you think? Oh, Miss Greville, I have been so wicked and resentful, and when I saw that my coldness wounded René I was so glad.”

“Well, you see the difference between a man and a woman,” said Miss Greville severely. “Your husband receives a letter full of impertinent insinuations about you, and he simply does not believe them, and for fear of annoying you, says nothing about it, and is as kind to you as ever?”

“Yes—yes,” said Valérie, “it is perfectly true—you are very cruel—but all you say is true.”

"My dear, be wiser for the future," said Miss Greville kindly, "there is no harm done."

"I will get the letter now, and burn it," said Valérie impulsively.

"No keep it," interrupted Miss Greville, "and let M. Baremo see it: it will go further towards clearing you from blame than any explanation you could give."

"It seemed so simple and kind, warning me that unless I tried to stop my husband from going so often to Monte Carlo, I should in the end be cruelly punished, because his motive in going there was not the play alone, and of this fact every one was aware but myself, and the writer, pitying my youth and inexperience gave me this hint, before matters had gone too far between a certain lady and René; and the writer went on to say, that if I mentioned the subject to my husband, I should only bring about what I wished to avoid—therefore the only way to prove my dislike to the vicious life he was leading, would be to refuse steadily and persistently to go with him to Monaco. You see I had some excuse," pleaded Valérie.

"From my point of view none at all," said Miss Gréville relentlessly. "I can see no reason why, without any proof at all, you should have believed this slanderer, who was afraid to give her name, instead of resenting the insult offered to your husband's honour."


"You think the writer was a woman?"

"An old woman, who knew the way to influence a very young and foolish one, whose faith could be too easily shaken by rousing her jealousy," said Miss Greville.

"Yes, I have been very wicked, I see it all now," said Valérie gently. "I wish he would come home, that I might ask him to forgive me."

"Is he always so late?" said Miss Greville, glancing at the time-piece which was on the stroke of two.

"Oh, much later," said Valérie, "and sometimes he does not return till seven o'clock in the morning. I used to sit up for him, till I saw how displeased he was, for I am always too nervous and restless to sleep, but now when I hear the carriage, I jump into bed



and pretend to be asleep, and so he is not vexed by thinking that I lose my night's rest."

"Poor child ! I would persuade him to leave this part of the world as soon as possible, it is a sad life for you."

"Oh no !" said Valérie cheerfully, "I do not mind as long as he does not desert me for some one else," while she spoke, a carriage drove into the courtyard, and almost immediately M. Baremo's quick firm step was heard in the passage leading to their rooms.

"He will not find you in bed and asleep to-night," said Miss Greville laughing, as they said "good night".

"No," answered Valérie, "and if he scolds me I shall lay the blame on you—remember."

Ten minutes later, Miss Dorothy Greville was fast asleep, and dreaming that Mrs. Paradise and M. Baremo were going to fight a duel beyond the frontier, and that she and Sister Eldreda were the seconds.

CHAPTER IX.

MONACO IN RAIN.

ON awaking the next morning Miss Greville was by no means surprised to see the rain falling in a steady downpour. It was a cold uncompromising rain, evidently determined to last for twenty-four hours, at least: such a day as often arrives in the early spring in the south of Europe, when, in spite of the lovely climate, the enthusiastic inhabitant of the north, who the day before has written to envious belongings describing, in glowing language, "the sun, which is really too hot, like a July day in England," shiveringly and shamefacedly remarks that he thinks he would like a little fire in his room, as he has some important letters to write, and sitting still always makes one cold, you know".

So Miss Greville, looking from her window at the dripping trees and wet gravel, soliloquises, as is her wont, "No pic-nic to-day, and I am not sorry, for it will give the Baremos time to make up their differences and come to a better understanding; and I do hope," she continued vindictively, "that Mrs. Paradise and her clique will be brought to speedy justice, if, as I strongly suspect, they were the authors of those anonymous letters; however, we shall see".

At about one o'clock, Parker, who still remained in Miss Greville's service, brought a note, given to her by Madame Baremo's maid. Parker strongly disapproved of her mistress's intimacy with the Marchessa, but, fortunately for herself, the fervour of her new religion had not yet given sufficient courage to speak disrespectfully of Miss Greville's friends in that lady's presence. The note contained two lines.

"DEAR MISS GREVILLE,

"Please come to me if you are at liberty.
"V. B."

Miss Greville lost no time in obeying the summons.

When she entered her friend's room she found her sitting in an attitude of the deepest dejection—her face was as white as a lily, and her swollen eyelids bore testimony to the way she had been employing her time.

"It is so good of you to come, dear Miss Greville," exclaimed Valérie, making a pitiful effort to smile. "I told my maid to inquire if you were awake before I sent the note, because, after the bad night I gave you, I thought you would not get up until late."

"I was not much later than usual," said Miss Greville, "but I am sorry, my dear, to see you looking so ill and tired."

"Yes, I sat up all night, though, unhappily, I fell asleep on the sofa for a short time," answered Valérie, her lip quivering like a child's. "Oh, Miss Greville, René will never forgive me! everything is at end between us."

"Does he not believe your explanation?" asked Miss Greville, who thought that there

must be a good deal of exaggeration in Valérie's fears.

"I have not seen him," she answered sadly.

"But how is that?" exclaimed Miss Greville in surprise; "surely I was not mistaken this morning, it was he that passed my door?"

"Yes, but he locked himself into his own room, and did not answer when I knocked at his door, and I was afraid to disturb him. I waited until I heard him moving about the room, and then I asked him to let me in for one moment."

"And he refused?" asked Miss Greville.

"He spoke to me as he had never done since our marriage," said Valérie, bursting into tears; "he begged me for God's sake to leave him in peace, he had had enough of my reproaches, and was too dead beat to be worried by me a second time in one day. I must wait till morning. So I said no more, and at last I was so tired I fell asleep on the sofa, and did not awake until my maid came to call me, and then I found that René had been gone about ten minutes, having left a message with his

servant for me, that he was going to breakfast with a friend at the *Maison D*——, as he had an appointment with his banker at half-past ten."

"But there is nothing in anything you have told me to frighten you, as far as I can see," said Miss Greville.

"But he has not been back since. He will never return, never care for me again," said Valérie, with the same sort of hard composure.

"My dear, you are over-excited," said Miss Greville soothingly, "why should not M. Baremo return after his business is finished? It is not two o'clock yet; besides, what have you done to cause such anger as you appear to dread? Only yesterday M. Baremo spoke of you with the deepest affection, and he cannot have changed so completely since then, besides men do not cherish a life-long resentment against their own wives on account of a few angry words, or a foolish understanding."

Valérie shook her head sadly, as if unconvinced.

"Probably he lost his money last night, and

was put out in consequence. However, when he does return, I would lose no time in explaining everything to him without any reservation."

How fervently at that moment Miss Greville longed to be a man, and swear all around at the writers of the anonymous letters, and the busybodies who were trying to destroy the peace of these two victims. She burned to relieve her feelings by strong language, but did not know the terms usually employed by the sterner sex under like circumstances! Of course I know "damn, and the deuce, and hang it all," a lady was once heard to complain, but when I am in passion, and try to say these words one after another as fast as possible, I don't seem to be much the better for it!

And this described Miss Dorothy Greville's feelings exactly.

"Will you read these letters," said Valérie, after a moment's silence; "read them carefully," she said bitterly, "and then tell me if you think he will ever return and forgive me!

Ah, why could not people have let us alone !
We did no harm to any one, and we *were* so
happy together !”

Miss Greville took the letters in silence.
The first she opened was from M. Baremo,
dated the same day at six o'clock that morning.

“ VALÉRIE,

“ You had better first read the letter
I enclose from your mother. I do not blame
either you or her for thinking that in marry-
ing me you did badly for yourself ; neither do
I blame you for having written to confide my
numerous shortcomings to your mother ; but
you should have been frank enough to tell me
that your life with me was so miserable, for in
my foolish blindness I thought we got on well
together, and, until the last few weeks, were
happy, rather than otherwise. My poor child,
had I known the real truth, I am the last man
in the world to inflict my society on a woman,
albeit my wife, who finds that companionship
irksome ; however, in the future, that evil will
be remedied.

"I trust to be able to send you some money this evening, for I know you have not much by you. I was hard hit at baccarat last night.

"There is not a word of truth in your mother's accusation that I associate with other women. It is a base lie. I have ever been true to you in deed and thought. On the score of gambling I have no defence to make. Poor little Valérie, I have been very fond of you, and you liked me, too, at one time, didn't you, darling ?

"R. B."

Miss Greville put down René's letter with a tightening at the heart for which she could not account. It was very unfortunate, but of course, when everything was explained, he would return to his wife, and forget that these clouds had ever arisen between them. Thus reasoning, she proceeded to read the letter from Valérie's mother—

"DEAR RENÉ,

"I learn with the deepest concern and motherly resentment that you are gambling

wickedly and unrestrainedly both at Nice and Monte Carlo—an abode of sin—where, as a married man with a young and most innocent wife, you ought never to have gone. My son-in-law, Monaco is no place for you! Leave it to the lost souls who have therein taken up their abode. If my lamented M. de Mirecourt were alive, I should not of course be compelled to enter upon this painful and indelicate subject; but, as my unhappy daughter is without any natural protector beside myself—for a husband who neglects her for the society of immoral people of the feminine sex—I blush as I write this—cannot be considered the *protector*, but the *insulter* of his wife!! Permit me to speak still more plainly. You are aware that I was averse to your marriage with my poor duped child. Your fortune was extremely small, and your reputation extremely damaged. Valérie's insane attachment to you overruled my better judgment, and I gave my consent. In less than a year, I hear that my daughter is miserable; insulted by your open admiration for women beyond the pale of

society, utterly neglected or left to the care of your wild bachelor friends, until her reputation has suffered ! And, as if all this scandal was not sufficient to break an ordinary mother's heart, I have the additional pain of hearing that you are squandering her fortune as recklessly as you did your own. If you have not, like the generality of gamblers, lost all honour and self-respect, you will at once renounce play of every description before you have absolutely ruined your unhappy wife, and bring her back to me, where at least she will be safe from the trials she now endures. Consider her delicate state of health, or, if you are indifferent to that, consider the bad effect these trials may have on your unborn babe.

“ Your deeply offended

“ Mother-in-Law,

“ EMILIE AUGUSTINE DE MIRECOURT.”

Miss Greville returned the letters to Madame Baremo without any comment. She felt in truth that Valérie had real grounds for her fears. It was impossible to say what might be

the effect of such a letter on a man with the temperament of M. Baremo. Of course the whole style was so exaggerated and angry that to an uninterested person, Madame de Mirecourt's epistle was more ludicrous than offensive, but to the individual concerned, who had the guilty consciousness of deserving blame, it was most galling.

"Have you read them both?" said Valérie, raising her poor worn face from the sofa cushion against which she leant in tearless misery.

"Yes," said Miss Greville, "your mother's letter came at an unfortunate moment."

"Very," replied Valérie, "who could have written to her? it was a cruel thing to do!"

"Did you not write?"

"I? no, certainly not. Do you think I should have complained of my husband to my mother, who always judged him so harshly from the beginning? Don't you see how hard it is upon me? René evidently believes I wrote to my mother, and he has a right to feel angry at such treachery, and how am I to

prove to him that I had no more to do with it than he had ? ”

“ By telling him,” suggested Miss Greville naturally enough.

“ Ah, if he would only return to me,” said Valérie sadly.

As she spoke her husband’s man Maurice knocked at the door. He brought back Madame’s note, because he had searched for his master in vain, he said, and having at length bethought him of enquiring at the house of a gentleman with whom his master was acquainted, he was there informed that M. le Marquis had gone to Monaco, upon which Maurice thought he had better return with the letter of Middle la Marquise. And then the man left the room with an expression of real concern on his honest face.

Valérie turned to Miss Greville in despair. “ You see everything is against me,” she said wearily, “ René will not return.”

“ Not before this evening, I am afraid,” said Miss Greville cheerfully.

"Nor then, or why did he say that he would *send* me the money?"

"Has he taken any luggage?" said Miss Greville.

"No, everything was in its usual place an hour ago," but as Valérie spoke she rose hastily and went into her husband's room calling on Miss Greville to follow. "You see nothing has been touched," she said, opening cupboards and drawers, and carefully examining his portmanteau and travelling bag.

Suddenly she stopped before the fire-place. It was half filled with burnt paper, letters torn up and half consumed, and the charred remains of what apparently had been old pocket-books.

The poor girl turned white to her lips. "Oh, what is the meaning of it?" she exclaimed, grasping Miss Greville's arm unconsciously.

"M. Baremo has been burning a few old letters probably, and the housemaid has forgotten to take away the ashes. Dear Mde. Baremo, pray do not look so frightened, there is no reason for it at all."

"You know you are not telling the truth,"

said Valérie impetuously, "you are frightened yourself, and you cannot hide it," she said looking intently at Miss Greville. "When people go from home for a few hours they do not burn all their old journals and correspondence. I am so frightened—so frightened that I do not know what to think," moaned the poor wife.

Neither to tell the truth, did Miss Greville.

"You must be reasonable and try," she began, but Valérie interrupted her excitedly,

"Miss Greville, you have been always kind to me since we first knew one another, will you do one thing more for me, even if you should think it an unreasonable request?" The wistful tired grey eyes looked so imploringly at Miss Greville, that her own filled with tears as she answered,

"My dear, you know I am ready to help you in any way in my power. I entirely sympathize with your anxiety, though I hope you are frightening yourself unnecessarily; what is it you wish me to do?"

"Will you come with me to Monaco?"

"What now, in this pouring rain?"

"Yes, yes, by the next train, oh, please don't refuse, or I must go alone."

"Will you let me go alone," said Miss Greville. "I will promise to bring you tidings of M. Baremo; I am sure you ought to be more careful of yourself."

"No, no, thank you a thousand thanks. I could not bear the suspense. I would rather walk to Monaco than endure another four hours of this intolerable anxiety."

Once when Miss Greville was a young woman, it had been her fate to live through three days and nights of the bitterest suspense, and remembering her own anguish during those weary hours, she felt that Mde. Baremo was right. The actual knowledge of the worst that can befall one, is less pain than the slow torture of those long creeping hours of uncertainty, when every minute seems like an hour, and each hour like a life-time of agony. During this prolonged mental suffering, few amongst us have sufficient courage to stifle the bitter cry of reproach, "Why was I born with this intense capacity for suffering?"

why is this intolerable burthen of life laid upon us ? ”

Miss Greville made no further opposition to Valérie's wishes, but on consulting the train tables she found that the next train to Monaco would not go for another hour, so Maurice was sent to the station to secure a coupé, where Valérie might get a little rest, and be safe from the curiosity of fellow-passengers ; and after leaving a note for M. Baremo in case he should return during their absence, and charging Maurice not to leave the hotel for an instant lest his master should appear, Mde. Baremo and Miss Greville departed to Monaco.

The train was filled with passengers, as is often the case on a wet day, all in search of excitement; and when one comes to think of it, the experience must be a perfectly novel one and, in this pleasure-seeking age, delightfully fascinating to delicately reared women, who after spending their youth in the pure atmosphere of their father's homes, suddenly find themselves transported to the gambling rooms of Monte Carlo, where Jews, Turks, infidels,

and reprobates of every nationality, congregate together to play like one vast happy family the interesting game of 'Beggar my Neighbour'.

True, certain members of the family snarl and snap occasionally at one another, but judicious keepers are always ready to remove the offenders until they can be taught better manners, and no doubt it is astonishing to see how delicate refined ladies put away their refinement and struggle manfully—or rather *womanfully*—a still stronger term—for the coins they have amassed in the process of begging their neighbours.

.

It is a new experience to young people, but how soon it grows monotonous to any one not addicted to gambling, thought Miss Greville as she walked with Valérie from table to table in search of M. Baremo.

Standing at the trente et quarante table Valérie found an acquaintance, an intimate friend of her husband.

In answer to her inquiry as to whether he

was in the Rooms, M. de Vergy replied that he had not seen him for some little time.

"He was here this afternoon?" asked Valérie.

"Oh, without doubt, not more than an hour ago."

"Had he been winning?"

To this question the young Frenchman was too prudent to reply. He said, "Baron Lestrangle was more likely to know, as they had been together all the afternoon".

Valérie's face brightened immensely when she heard these reassuring words; after all René had spent his day in the usual way, with his accustomed associates, and so, she reasoned, there could not be so very much amiss.

In the meantime the amiable Frenchman went in search of Baron Lestrangle.

Presently, another acquaintance came up to speak to Mde. Baremo, an Englishman this time, short, under-bred in appearance, with a repulsive physiognomy. At the moment, however, his face was beaming with good humour and general philanthropy because, as he gush-

ingly informed Mde. Baremo, he had just won a 'pot of money'.

Poor Valérie, not perfectly comprehending the argot of a gambling place, responded by an amiable but unmeaning smile, which so enchanted the Englishman that, with the want of tact which was one of his strongest points, he expressed a wish that poor Baremo had been equally fortunate.

"He lost, did he?" said Valérie with admirable coolness, though a spasm of pain crossed her face as she spoke. "My friend and I have only just arrived from Nice, perhaps you can tell us where we are likely to find M. Baremo?"

"He is not here now, I fancy," answered the Englishman, "but if you like to walk round the rooms, we can examine each table separately, for if he is at Monte Carlo at all, in such weather as this, he is not very likely to be any where but inside the Casino. The fact is," continued the Englishman, "it never answers to be nervous at play. Now I should call Baremo a nervous playman; *de l' audace, et toujours de l' audace*, has always been my

principle, and that is how I won my money to-day," said this egotistical islander, chuckling in an ecstasy of pride.

"I am glad, I mean I congratulate you," said Valérie absently, scanning with anxious eyes the faces of the players sitting at the tables, or standing round watching the game.

They came to the last table in the inner room.

"No, he is not here," said the Englishman at length, "I thought we should not find him, because I heard him say to Lestrangle when we were all standing on the steps, and he came out and joined, 'Well I have shot my last bolt,'—which I took to mean that he had lost all the money he brought with him from Nice. Yes, yes, everything depends on the play."

Valérie turned very white but made no reply, and at the moment M. de Vergy reappeared, having found Baron Lestrangle, who said that M. Baremo had returned to Nice.

"In that case," said the Englishman, "he must have driven over the mountain in a car-

riage, for there has been no train since I last saw him, up to the present time, except the one to Italy."

This last remark was only heard by Miss Greville, for Valérie had wandered on still scanning each separate face, in hopes that at length she might discover the dear one she so craved to see.

Notwithstanding the improbability of her husband still being at Monaco, Valérie lingered on in the Casino, now gradually beginning to empty as the hour for dinner approached.

Only thirty or forty people remained at the tables, those who really meant serious play and chose this hour, when the rooms were comparatively empty, and the crowds of curious lookers on had betaken themselves to the various hotels in the principality. One or two of the enemy's servants walked listlessly from one room to another, occasionally bringing tumblers of water to the weary croupiers who repeated the monotonous formula *messieurs*

faites vos jeux, le jeu est fait. Rien ne va plus, with maddening reiteration.

At Valérie's request Miss Greville inquired of one of the servants if the Marchese was still at Monte Carlo ; for all high players are well known to the employés, who are commanded by their employers to treat them with the abject consideration they merit in bringing so much grist to the great gambling mill.

"Monsieur le Marquis had been playing at trente et quarante all the afternoon, and he had won, oh, enormously ; in fact he had broken the bank twice, if not three times running."

This cheering information raised Valérie's hopes high again, for she knew instinctively that if her husband had had any run of good luck, he would be far less implacable than if he had continued to lose ; but Miss Greville, with her usual keen insight into human nature, felt convinced the man was not telling the truth ; so, unobserved by Valérie, she approached the *trente et quarante* table where M. Baremo had been playing so long, and, glancing at the

markers, found that in spite of its repeated losses the bank was considerably on the winning side. This discovery she did not impart to Valérie, because after all it proved nothing, and would only have renewed her anxiety, which, for the moment, seemed considerably soothed.

“Was the Marchese still at Monte Carlo?”

“Ah, impossible to say, he would go to the Vestiàre and inquire.”

Presently he returned with the information that Monsieur le Marquis had taken his overcoat an hour—no, two hours—previously, and had announced his intention of returning to Nice.

“How, I wonder, since there was no train?” sorrowfully pondered Miss Greville, in the innermost depths of her heart; but this view of the matter fortunately did not occur to Madame Baremo, who was radiant with delight.

“Of course,” she said, “he has returned to Nice! How foolish of me to have frightened myself and you so unnecessarily. How

long shall we have to wait for the next train ?”

“About an hour, and in the meantime we must dine,” said Miss Greville prosaically, “and I think we had better go to that quiet hotel in the Condamine, and afterwards start from the Monaco Station, where we shall be less likely to meet any one we know.”

So Madame Baremo and Miss Greville left the Casino and its lighted halls and doubtful company, and passed out—one of them for the last time—through the swing door held open for them by an obsequious servant, through the entrance hall, redolent of tobacco smoke, where liveried servants and foreign princes and English nobles, and a sprinkling of detectives, walked up and down the narrow space, talking in subdued or hilarious tones ; and they went down the slippery marble steps into the dark, chill night, starless and dismal, with the rain falling steadily, straight down from the sky.

Madame Baremo insisted on walking to the hotel ; it was not very far, and she said the carriages would be damp and uncomfortable ;

but her real reason was that she hoped by some mysterious chain of events to meet her husband.

As they passed the clump of palms near the entrance to the gardens, Valérie gave an involuntary shudder. They looked so ghost-like and weird standing out darkly against the leaden sky.

"It was there," she thought sadly, "that René and I sat in the lovely sunshine on one of our first visits to Monaco, and planned how we would win enough money to buy a property. Oh! what foolish dreams, and how have they all ended!" she murmured sorrowfully.

She stopped for an instant and looked out wistfully over the gloom of the gardens at the restless sea, and the gleaming lights in the old town perched on its strong rock.

On a bench above the sea, on the terrace below near the white balustrade, she saw, by the light of a flickering lamp, a dark motionless figure half lying along the seat.

"Do you see that man, or what is it, on the bench below?" she asked her companion.

"Yes, it is a night guard, I suppose," replied Miss Greville, "wrapped up in his cloak, waiting to be relieved."

Presently another dark figure stepped out of the gloom, and, approaching the bench, bent over the recumbent figure and appeared to speak. A cold, keen wind crept down from the mountains, causing Valérie to draw her shawl more closely round her.

"How chilly these southern spring nights are," she exclaimed shivering; "oh! I hope René is at home."

"Let us hasten on," said Miss Greville: the keen cold wind had affected her, too, most strangely; and from the depths of her heart she echoed poor Valérie's wish, that M. Baremo might at that moment be safe at home.

When they reached the hotel by the sea, Miss Greville made a pretence of dining, in the hope of inducing Valérie to take some food, but all her persuasions were in vain. At the Monaco Station the poor lady found, to her extreme annoyance, that all the coupés were already taken, so there was nothing left but to

get into the least crowded carriage she could find. Miss Greville was growing exceedingly uneasy about Valérie, feeling, in a measure, responsible for her safety, and the poor girl's white anxious face was by no means reassuring. The only other occupants of the carriage were two Englishmen, who talked incessantly of the play, interlarding their discourse with an occasional anecdote of doubtful taste.

As the train entered the Eza tunnel, three or four ominous jerks nearly nearly threw one of the Englishmen into Miss Greville's lap; however, as nothing more happened, they all by degrees recovered their composure.

"A defunct gambler probably," remarked one Englishman to the other, "who chose that most uncomfortable way of going over to the majority. I must own I had rather not be cut to pieces in a tunnel by a passenger train."

"I suppose one way of going out of the world is as good as another," said his companion curtly, "but *àpropos* of suicides, I heard, just as I left the Casino, that a foreign prince, a Russian I think, had blown his

brains out, at the café I think they said, but I won't be sure. However, when I asked one of the servants, he burst out laughing, and declared that he had heard nothing about it, so I suppose it was not true."

"They tell such lies, those fellows, one never knows what to believe," and then the two friends began to talk of other things, to Miss Greville's extreme relief. She glanced nervously at Valérie, but the poor girl was leaning back with closed eyes and white rigid face, making no sign of how much or how little she had heard of the conversation between the Englishmen.

When, at last, they drove into the hotel garden, Valérie turned excitedly to Miss Greville,

"Are there lights in our rooms? You can see from your window," she said.

Miss Greville leaned forward.

"Yes, the *salon* appears to be brilliantly lighted," she replied.

"Thank God, he has returned!" murmured Valérie.

They hastened up the wide shallow staircase, Valérie running on eagerly and opening the sitting-room door, exclaiming, as she turned the handle, "René!"

Miss Greville stood a little back, intending to escape unobserved to her own rooms further on, as soon as Valérie had shut the door; but, as Madame Baremo called out her husband's name, Maurice came hastily forward.

"Monsieur le Marquis has not yet returned."

Valérie stood perfectly motionless for a moment, then turning back from the room, she tottered forward with arms stretched out towards Miss Greville, who hastened to meet her.

"I cannot bear it," she cried, and so fell heavily to the ground in a swoon.

CHAPTER X.

"MY RENÉ."

ONE o'clock in the morning found Miss Greville sitting in Madame Baremo's room by the side of a sofa, on which lay Valérie in a heavy slumber; not a refreshing one, for from time to time she started and sighed heavily, murmuring her husband's name, as though, even in her dreams, she was imporing him to return to her.

The fainting fit had not lasted long. Miss Greville and Maurice together had carried her to her room, and one of the hotel servants went for a doctor, who happened to be under the same roof.

Unfortunately, Madame Baremo's maid had gone away that very morning for a week's holiday, so Miss Greville summoned her

amiable Parker, who, taking into consideration that Madame Boremo, though a "Monaco gambler and dreadful wicked," was still a "member of the aristocracy," consented for the time to lay aside her new religion, and with it her prejudices, and proved herself an excellent nurse. Before the doctor arrived Valérie had recovered from her fainting fit, and was working herself into a frenzy of anxiety at her husband's prolonged absence.

The doctor looked very grave when he heard the reason of Madame Baremo's sudden illness, and prescribed a sleeping draught, begging her to go to bed ; but this she positively refused to do, assuring him that Monsieur Baremo would return in a few minutes, and that she must be dressed to receive him.

The doctor signed to Miss Greville not to oppose her, and at length Valérie consented to take a little rest on the sofa.

At the end of half an hour the opium began to take effect, and before midnight Valérie had fallen into such a deep slumber that Miss Greville sent Parker to bed, intending to

watch by her poor friend until morning. A profound silence reigned everywhere.

The last train had arrived, and the inhabitants of Nice, both in the hotel and elsewhere, seemed rapt in slumber.

"Where can he be? What can have happened?" were the two questions Miss Greville asked herself with wearying reiteration.

"Oh, forgive me, darling, forgive me!" muttered Valérie in her sleep. "Oh, René, I am sorry, I will never, never suspect you again," and the words died away in a sob.

Miss Greville bent over the sofa. "She will lose her reason if this suspense lasts much longer; it would be far better she should know even the worst, and get it over," thought the perplexed old lady.

The timepiece in the salon chimed one, and presently all the clocks in the neighbourhood rang out the hour. Miss Greville shuddered; she was not as a rule the least inclined to be superstitious, but as each clock struck one, it sounded like the solemn stroke of a church bell tolling for the dead.

All at once the distant rumbling of wheels broke the silence of the night. The sound came nearer and nearer, and then seemed to stop in front of the hotel ; there was a subdued hum of voices in the street below, and then suddenly the sharp loud peal of the porter's bell rang through the stillness of the night—another long silence—and then came the clanging of opening gates, and the rumble of a heavy vehicle entering the courtyard. Miss Greville rose softly and went into the salon, closing the bedroom door behind her, lest the noise should disturb Valérie.

At first she thought the hotel omnibus was returning late from the station, but after a moment's reflection she remembered having heard it came back an hour before.

The noise seemed to increase. "It cannot be Monsieur Baremo," thought Miss Greville, "there are too many voices, what *can* be the matter!" for always, though unacknowledged even to herself, that terrible conviction of a coming misfortune clung about her heart.

Suddenly the confusion or sounds inside the

hotel proved that something unusual was going on. Bells began to ring, some gently, some loudly, doors opened and shut, followed by a buzz of many voices mingled with an occasional exclamation of terror or pain.

Trembling and faint with fright, Miss Greville opened the sitting room door, and looked out into the dark corridor. A hasty step approached, reminding her of M. Baremo's quick firm tread.

"Thank God!" she exclaimed, but it was only a servant carrying a lamp, and he quickly passed without speaking.

Miss Greville hastened to the landing at the head of the staircase, passing half open doors from which peered frightened faces, asking helplessly what could be the reason of this midnight awakening.

Suddenly Valérie's little dog, which had followed Miss Greville without her remarking it, set up a piteous howl. The startled lady caught it in her arms, trying to smother its dismal cries. A draught of cold night air came up from below, extinguishing a solitary

candle which glimmered faintly on a distant table.

Some one struck a match and turned on the gas in the passage, revealing Mrs. Paradise in a frilled cap and a scarlet dressing gown leaning over the bannisters, and calling out in shrill excited tones, "Not here ! not here ! it would be an outrage to admit a——*it* under such circumstances. If such a scandal is permitted, we will all leave your hotel to-morrow ?"

"What a mercy for those who are left behind !" loudly exclaimed a young and diminutive man clad in a curious garment sprinkled with long tailed imps.

"Hush, Teddy !" whispered a tall lady reprovingly.

"What *is* the meaning of it ?" asked Miss Greville, in a voice she in vain tried to make steady.

"Oh, it is too terribly shocking !" was the reply.

"What is it ?" she gasped. "If I could only get to the head of the staircase and see for myself."

"Oh, there is such a crowd, I think all the hotel must be here!" replied the tall lady. "No one does know exactly."

"What *has* happened?" asked Mrs Greville for the third time. "Does not any one know?"

"*Oh mon Dieu! quel malheur!*" exclaimed a compassionate Frenchman, "*ce pauvre diable.*"

All this time Mrs. Paradise's voice clattered discordantly like a mill wheel.

"Madame is perfectly right," said a voice from the darkness below; "you must remove it, my friends! Such a scandal will lose me all my *clientèle*. Take it to the proper place, you understand?"

"That is precisely what we do not do," answered a gruff voice, sulkily. "We were told to bring *it* here to the address found in the pocket. We fulfilled our instructions, coming over La Turbie in a storm fit to drown a dog, and now settle the rest yourself. Bring it along!" shouted the man to his comrades outside in the rain.

"I forbid it! I forbid it!" said the land-

lord, jumping about and gesticulating, by the light of an oil lamp held in the trembling hand of a whitefaced waiter. A door opened at the head of the staircase, and a tall Englishman appeared, and pushing his way through the frightened knot of women and helpless men, mostly invalids, who obstructed the stairs, called out authoritatively to the landlord to turn on the gas.

The man continued to jump about, and paid no attention to the request.

"Turn on the gas, you chattering idiot!" repeated the Englishman, stepping up to the irate little Niçois, "How the deuce are we to see who it is by the light of that lamp?"

"They say it is an Englishman," said some one standing near Miss Greville.

"But was it an accident or a murder?" asked some one else.

"God knows, a suicide probably, poor devil."

"Some one found dead at Monaco," said Mrs. Paradise; "is not that enough?"

Poor Mrs. Greville was trembling from head to foot. She *knew* so well, without being told,

who had been found dead at Monaco—*what* would presently be brought in out of the wind and the rain. She knew, and so did the little dog shivering and whining so piteously in her arms, as she leant over the bannisters and peered into the darkness below.

“Turn on the gas, confound you,” stormed the indignant Englishman.

This time he was obeyed, and a flood of light filled the spacious hall, revealing the crowd of dressed and half-dressed people who thronged the staircase and passages, all striving to catch a glimpse of *what* five or six hours before was one of themselves, and might have passed through their midst without observation. Now, *it* was there, and yet how far removed from them! It had gone out into the unknown, and they, left behind, trembled and cowered before the cold inanimate form, whose spirit, set free before its time, had started on its lonely journey to solve the awful mystery of mercy or justice, of eternal life or death.

The folding doors were thrown open, and

out of the pitch-like blackness of night staggered three or four men, with the rain streaming from their garments, bearing on their shoulders their ghastly burden. They laid it down in its rude coffin—(provided and kept ready by thoughtful Monaco for its probable victims)—on the table under the flaring gaslight.

The rain-soaked rug that covered the face of the dead was drawn gently away.

.

There was a sudden rush. . . Two or three women fell on their knees sobbing and praying in their exceeding horror; even Mrs. Paradise was awed into silence.

The tall Englishman stepped forward and bent over the coffin . . . a moment of intense agonized expectation. “Good God!” he exclaimed, in a voice of horror, “it is Baremo!”

“Baremo! impossible! I was talking to him at four o'clock!” said another Englishman, starting forward.

“Look for yourself.”

“By heaven, you are right,” was the answer, “what could *have made him do it?*”

From the landing above Miss Greville heard it all as if in a dream. She had feared the worst for several hours, but now she doubted the evidence of her own senses.

Down the stairs she went, impelled by a strange awful fascination, to look on the face of the dead.

She stooped over the coffin. . . . Yes, it was René.

Poor Valérie's René, who had gone beyond all human love or hate. M. Baremo, lying rain-soaked in his rough wooden coffin, with the awful smile of death on his lips, so touching in its exceeding gladness.

For the moment Miss Greville had completely forgotten Valérie's existence.

As sometimes happens in moments of intense excitement, she was thinking quite calmly of the first time she ever saw M. Baremo on the terrace at Monte Carlo playing with a friend's little boy ; she was thinking of how he had

laughed and wished her good-bye, not more than twenty-four hours before ; she thought of a hundred little trifles, but never once of Valérie.

Some one near her said, " He was found on a bench on the lower terrace at Monte Carlo with the pistol lying by his side. He was found by an Englishman, and the Administration are trying to hush the matter up."

Some one else said, " Poor devil, he was utterly broke at the Club last night, and I suppose went to Monaco as a last hope."

Every one said something, but no one seemed to remember Valérie, until the Englishman who had all along preserved his coolness and *savoir faire*, remarked " His poor wife must be told ! " At the same moment the hum of voices above ceased, and Miss Greville glancing up, saw Valérie standing at the top of the stairs dressed in her long white dressing-gown, with her lovely golden hair streaming over her shoulders. She was looking round half-bewildered at the unfamiliar faces gazing at her.

"Stop her," gasped Miss Greville, "don't let her see him."

Some one laid a handkerchief over the dead man's face, and two or three kind-hearted women strove to stand between Valérie and the balustrade, and hide what was waiting for her below, entreating her with voices broken by sobs to go back to her own room.

"It is the will of God," began Mrs. Paradise, "and doubtless this trial is sent for your good, if you accept it in a becoming spirit."

But Valérie instinctively turned away with a shudder from Mrs. Paradise.

"I don't understand," she said to Miss Greville who was now by her side, "has anything happened? Has René come back? Where is he?" she continued breathlessly. "Is it an accident? let me pass, I insist, let me go to my husband."

Miss Greville clung to her. "Listen, my dear, come back to your room and you shall hear everything," but Valérie pushed her aside with gentle force.

"Why do you keep me from my husband? If he is hurt let me go to him."

No one could stop her without using actual violence.

Down the staircase she hurried, the people mostly making way for her instinctively. The tall Englishman stepped forward, and taking her hand tried to hold her back, but she drew them away with a gesture of impatience, and he made no further attempt to stop her.

She walked up to the coffin and pulled away the handkerchief that covered the dead man's face.

.
Now may God in his mercy grant, that we may never hear again such a cry of human anguish as broke from that poor girl's lips when she saw her husband's face.

No living soul who heard that bitter wail of agony is ever likely to forget it.

"My René! my René! Has he fainted? I don't know what it means! Oh, what is it? what is it?" she moaned, turning her agonised

eyes and stricken ashen face from one to the other.

"My dear! my poor poor child, you must try to bear it," whispered Miss Greville, "it is the very worst that can happen," she said, holding the trembling hands that clutched so wildly at the coffin.

"He is so cold and wet, he has fainted. Help him, will you not help him?" she wailed, trying to put her arm under his head and raise him. "René, speak to me, my René speak to me."

"Madame, *il est mort*," said the French doctor who had been previously called in by Miss Greville; "*il est mort*," he repeated, trying to make her realize the meaning of his words.

Madame Baremo looked at him blankly, she did not understand.

"Let every one be sent away," said the doctor authoritatively, "stand back, if you please, and leave me alone with this lady, otherwise, I will not answer for the consequences. Madame," he continued, laying his hand on

Valérie's arm, "I want to speak to you, will you raise your head and listen to me?" Valérie took no notice at all, only she trembled violently and shrank closer to her husband, laying her face against his and whispering to him all the while as if she fancied he could hear. By this time the hall was empty; with the exception of the Englishman and the doctor, no one remained with Valérie but Miss Greville.

The doctor called a frightened white-faced servant, who was hurrying through the hall, and inquired if there was a vacant room into which the dead man could be carried. He hastened to find the landlord, who was standing on the stairs talking in a low voice to a group of people who had not retired to their rooms, but no sooner had he delivered the doctor's message to his master, than a tumult began such as had never been heard before in any hotel in civilized Europe: One by one a crowd collected again on the landing; the presence of the dead was no restraint; men talked loud and remonstrated, women shrieked

and fell into hysterics, even the children in their beds joined in the general uproar, calling out piteously in terror of they knew not what.

“What the —— is the matter now? Has a foreign Bedlam broken loose? Surely there has been row enough for the night!” muttered the indignant Englishman to the French doctor, who was watching Valérie with grave anxious eyes.

She stood with her arm thrown across her husband’s inanimate form, as if she feared some might try to separate them again; and all the time she talked to him, with wild frightened eyes out of which the light of reason had gone, gazing down on the calm still face of the dead. “She is quite off her head,” groaned the doctor, “for the love of heaven stop this noise, and send those shrieking women to bed.”

.

“*Monsieur le docteur.* Milor pardon,” said the landlord wildly rushing up; “*this* must be removed at once,” almost striking the coffin

in his excitement—"at once, out of the hotel this very moment, you understand. I am a ruined man as it is! my best customers threaten to leave my house to-morrow, every servant in the hotel has given notice to leave, there was never such a scandal before. Take it away to the chapel for the dead. Nay, if you refuse, I will have it put outside in the street!" screamed the little Niçois, shaking his forefinger in the doctor's face.

"Which would cause a greater scandal that ever I imagine," interposed the Englishman. "Calm your transports, M. Perrot, and tell me how much you would lose by the immediate departure of your best customers."

"But enormously, Milor"

"Very good, let us deal in figures if you please, not heroics. I myself do not feel inclined to spend another night under the same roof with your best customers, they are too noisy; but for any loss this may entail upon you, I am ready to pay double."

"Ah Milor! ah Milor! in what an unhappy position do I find myself placed! such an old

customer as yourself! so generous! so truly noble! Ah! merciful heaven! that Monaco! if it could be swallowed up in the sea!"

"Never mind Monaco, either you *do* accept my offer, or you do not! make up your mind which it is to be, and lose no time about it."

"But Milor, must they go at once? it is impossible to turn ladies out of my house at a moment's notice. In fact, I don't think they *would* go!" said the bewildered Niçois, making a rapid calculation of how much he would gain by accepting the Englishman's offer.

"The people who object to—to—you understand," said the doctor, "are ladies?"

"Certainly, Monsieur, after the first shock they seemed quite content, may I be permitted to say, and talked of having prayers and burning tapers, and then all at once a clergyman of another persuasion objected, and they began to dispute among themselves, and then they seemed to recollect that he was a gambler, and one or two of them began to

scream. They are good ladies, and work for the poor; very good charitable ladies, the English are very religious Christians, but they don't seem to agree one with another, but all good in their way, only peculiar," said the landlord, but without a shade of irony in his voice.

"Admirable people," agreed the Englishman, "and now be good enough to waste no more time in talking, but tell me if I, or your best customers are to go."

"Pardon Milor, in a moment," said the man running upstairs. He returned in a few minutes looking extremely crestfallen. "They will not listen to me, Milor! They will not go away themselves, nor allow *it* to stay. Madame Paradise who spoke for the others, said that the roof would fall and crush us, as a judgment, and that in any case, she would write to the *Times* to-morrow mentioning the name of the hotel where the scandal took place. Your *Times*, that is to be found in every hotel in the world. Monsieur Milor, I

could bear a great deal to please you, but not the *Times*, for that means Ruin !”

.

The Englishman and doctor consulted together, and agreed that the remains of M. Baremo must be removed to the Mortuary Chapel, and if Madame Baremo made any resistance, she must go too.

Maurice was sent on to prepare the guardians of the Cemetery, while the Englishman went to the house of a friend to secure shelter for Valérie till other arrangements could be made.

As the doctor expected, Valérie utterly refused to leave her husband's side until she saw the carriage waiting to convey her where he was going.

The rain came down in torrents as the melancholy procession drove through the silent streets.

Valérie sat by Miss Greville's side in perfect silence, watching, with that strange wild look which came into her eyes when she first saw her dead husband, the dismal hearse as they

journeyed by its side in the cold grey morning. If she lost sight of it for a moment she tried to open the carriage door, and it required all Miss Greville's strength to keep her quiet.

.

And at last they reached the little Chapel where Maurice and the guardian awaited their arrival, and the dead man found a resting place, where no good christian disputed his right to remain.

The air was damp and chilly as in a vault, but Valérie's face and hands were burning with fever, and she was restless and excitable until the necessary arrangements could be made, and she allowed to be near her husband.

She sat by his side, her burning cheek resting against his icy one, her hand on the cold ones lying motionless across his breast.

For a long long time, an eternity it seemed to her companion, she remained thus, gazing with wide open eyes straight before her.

Suddenly she raised herself, and looked eagerly at the doctor standing near her.

"He is better now?" she said.

"Yes."

"He is asleep now?"

"Yes."

"How soon will he wake?"

"You must be very quiet," said the doctor evasively.

"Ah! not to disturb him? I will be very quiet, but it is an odd bed they have given him, it is so narrow."

"Yes."

"He is still very very cold, will you put something over him, please?"

The doctor brought a shawl. "Ah, that is better, will he soon be warm now?"

"You must not talk, Madame; will you take this?" offering her some medicine he had brought on purpose.

"Will it give me strength to nurse him when he wakes?"

"Yes."

She took the medicine obediently, and leaning over her husband, pressed her lips on the broad white brow, and on the damp ruffled

hair, kissing him—not knowing—for the last time.

“How sound he sleeps! he must be very very tired,” she said, “but he will tell me all about it when he wakes to-morrow. Oh, I am glad to be with him again, I am very happy now.”

Then she nestled close to the side of the coffin, laying her lovely fevered face on the dead man’s shoulder, and so gradually gently fell asleep.

.

“Ought she to be allowed to stay there?” whispered Miss Greville to the doctor.

“Yes, yes,” he answered, “I have given her a strong narcotic; by the time it has taken effect your countryman will be waiting with a carriage to take her to a friend’s house.” And thus it came to pass.

Before the next morning Valérie’s child was born prematurely, and the doctors pronounced the mother hopelessly and incurably insane.

Miss Greville lingered on at Nice until Valérie’s mother arrived, and then, purposely

avoiding a meeting with her, she bid her poor unconscious friend farewell, and left Nice with the firm resolution of never re-visiting it again.



AFTER THREE YEARS.



SEQUEL BY MISS DOROTHY GREVILLE.

AFTER THREE YEARS.

WE were spending a few weeks at the little French watering place, Venlettes, whither we had gone for change of air and scene. My cousin, Margaret, having pronounced all the English sea-side places, "intolerable," with the amiability which is one of my best qualities, I expressed my readiness to fall into any plan suggested by my companion of the hour. So Margaret, little Hilda, the German *bonne*, and myself, betook ourselves to Venlettes.

In a parenthesis, I may as well say that my admirable Parker had during the previous autumn changed her form of worship for the fourth time, and left my service for the purpose of marrying a Quaker, whose easy circumstances would enable her for the rest of her life to

have her meals with the regularity she had so much appreciated when living with me.

We found Venlettes monotonous, but remarkably healthy ; and the sands an earthly Paradise to little Hilda, who spent her whole time in making sand houses and romping with the good natured French *bonne* till she grew as sun burnt as a little gipsy. Three pleasant drowsy weeks slipped away, nothing occurring to change the sameness of our daily life ; in fact, we seemed to have chosen a spot unknown alike to British tourists, or needy foreigners in search of economy.

I had never mentioned to Margaret, nor, indeed, to any one, the tragedy in which I had been an unwilling actor during my last visit to Nice, now nearly three years ago. The place was so fraught with sad recollections that, when I left it, I resolved never to return there again.

For the first few months, Mrs. Hetherington had given me news of poor Madame Baremo, and the accounts were always the same, "she is hopelessly and incurably insane, but is

gradually recovering her health ;” and then after a time we ceased to correspond, and Valéria Baremo seemed to have passed out of my life for ever.

I was surprised, therefore, one day when Margaret asked me if I remembered meeting an Anglican Sister of Mercy, who was spending the winter at Nice, in the same hotel as myself three years before.

“It is possible,” I replied, “but I do not remember her.”

“Her name in religion is Sister Eldreda,” said Margaret.

“Yes,” I replied, “I remember the name now you mention it.”

“She is a wonderfully good person, no longer young, but so charitable, spending her whole life in nursing the sick. Such self-abnegation always fills me with admiration,” said Margaret.

“Where did you meet her ?” I asked.

“She was nursing in a hospital where one of our servants was, a patient, and this poor girl happened to mention your name before Sister

Eldreda, who remembered it at once in connection with a terrible tragedy which took place about that time at Nice, and in which you were mixed up in some way. I wonder you never mentioned it to me," said Margaret reproachfully.

"I should like to hear Sister Eldreda's version of it," I said grimly.

"Oh, it was very simple ; an everyday occurrence, I have no doubt, at Nice, so near as it is to Monaco. Two young married people were living in the same hotel as Sister Eldreda. . . . But why should I tell you, when you know the story already ?" said Margaret.

"Because I want to compare Sister Eldreda's version of the story with—the reality."

"The lady was pretty, fond of dress, and extremely vain ; is that right ?" said Margaret mischievously.

"Go on," I answered.

"The gentleman was addicted to gambling, and his wife took advantage of this to carry on a disgraceful intrigue ——"

“Don’t use adjectives, Margaret, all intrigues are disgraceful,” I interrupted testily, as a sort of safety-valve for my rising indignation.

“Well, an intrigue, without the adjective—with a friend of her husband, who was also a gambler, and whom she supplied secretly with large sums of money! The scandal became so great that at last some one thought it right to tell the husband ——”

“Forgive me for interrupting you. Sister Eldreda did not happen to mention the name of the person who thought it right to tell the husband?” I asked.

“She mentioned no names; the poor husband remonstrated repeatedly with his wife, and violent scenes took place between them; and, at length, in a fit of anger and despair, he actually committed suicide.”

“Is that all?” I asked.

“Yes, at least I believe the wife pretended to make a great fuss, but every one knew that it was put on to save appearances, and that in reality she did not care the least.”

“Or it might have been remorse,” I suggested.

"If she was capable of feeling such a sentiment," replied Margaret severely.

"Just so. You consider Sister Eldreda a good woman?"

"Have I not already told you, my dear Dorothy, that she is one of the best people I ever met, without any exception?"

"To stand by, knowing what I *know*, and hear you call her *good*," I quoted bitterly.

Margaret looked at me in amazement.

"Is she *not* good, Dorothy?"

"Remarkably so, from your point of view, no doubt."

"Is not the story true?"

"No."

"Is it a pure invention?"

"No, it is founded on fact."

"Will you tell me what really happened?"

"No, Margaret: at least, some day, perhaps; another time; I cannot tell. Have you repeated Sister Eldreda's story to many people besides myself?"

"Yes, to three or four—people who know Nice and Monaco, and were likely to be

interested in it," replied Margaret, blushing slightly.

"Some day I will tell you the real story as it happened ; in the meantime, I will tell you another if you like."

"Yes."

"Once upon a time there lived a lady in a small town in Italy, who had an extraordinary love of hearing and repeating gossip. She was aware of her fault, and tried, without success, to break herself of it. At length she resolved to consult a wise old priest who lived in a neighbouring town ——"

"My dear Dorothy," interrupted Margaret laughing, "may I ask if your story is a 'tale with a moral,' or do you mistake me for little Hilda?"

"May I go on?" I asked gravely.

"Oh, certainly, if you like."

"The lady, therefore, went to this priest and asked his advice upon the subject."

"My daughter," said the good man, "your fault is a grave one, and will increase as years

go on, unless you resolutely stamp it out ere it becomes too strong for you."


"My father, I desire nothing better, and it was for that purpose I came to consult you. What must I do to conquer this evil habit ere it be too late?"

"You must perform an act of penance, my daughter."

"I am ready to do what you desire," said the lady humbly.

"Go first to the market," said the priest, "and buy a dead fowl, and when you get to a certain distance, along a certain road, begin to pluck it, throwing the feathers right and left as you walk, until the fowl is bare; afterwards return here to me."

The lady was very much surprised, but she made no reply, and went and bought a fowl as the priest had desired, and walking into the country, she plucked the feathers from the bird, throwing them carelessly right and left. When the fowl was bare, she returned to the priest, who said, "My daughter, you have performed the first half of your penance; return now



along the same road and carefully pick up all the feathers you plucked from the fowl, taking care not to lose one, and bring them back to me”.

“But, my father,” remonstrated the lady, “what you tell me to do is impossible ! I threw them right and left as you commanded, and the wind blew them away I know not where ; how, therefore, could I ever find them again ?”

“True, my daughter ; and thus it is with the idle tales you tell of others ; the stories fall from your lips heedlessly, and are carried like feathers blown by the wind, hither and thither, you know not where ; and when once the cruel words are uttered, it would be as impossible to recall them as to find again the feathers you plucked from the fowl, which were borne away by the breeze beyond your ken for ever.”

“It is a very excellent story, with an equally admirable moral,” said Margaret, “but I should like to know what I have done to bring down such a severe rebuke on my head ?”

“You repeated Sister Eldreda’s story to three or four people who know Nice and

Monaco," I replied, "and they will repeat it to three or four more ; and so it will be carried hither and thither like feathers floating on the wind, until you know not where it will go, and it is not true."

"Tell me the true version, and I will contradict ——" but I interrupted Margaret.

"It is too late," I said, "you can never pick up the feathers again."

.

One evening we were sitting in the wooden balcony of our salon, as the landlady chose to designate a large carpet-less, furniture-less room, that we had appropriated on our arrival, and made as habitable as circumstances permitted—when an old fashioned travelling carriage came slowly rumbling along the white, dusty road, and eventually drew up before the door of our inn

"What a bore!" I exclaimed, with the usual love of seclusion, peculiar to my nation. "I only hope they are not English!"

"Some one who evidently intends to spend

a long time here !” remarked Margaret, “ they have so much luggage.”

In the meantime, all the hotel servants hurried to meet the new arrival, and presently the old fat landlady was summoned, and approached the carriage in evident perturbation and self-abasement.

After a lengthened colloquy, the door was opened by one of the hotel servants, and an elderly lady of dignified appearance stepped out, followed by a tall, slight girl, dressed in black, and then a very small child jumped into the arms of a fat, good natured looking *bonne*, who had, in the meantime, descended from her seat on the box by the side of the coachman.

“ Madame la Grandmère, accompanied by her daughter and grand-child,” remarked Margaret sagaciously.

“ What an infliction !” I exclaimed.

“ Oh, I daresay we shall see nothing of them,” said Margaret, beginning to read, for the fifteenth time, a letter she had received that morning from her husband, and my amiable godson, George Scott.

"George says it is so hot in the country," remarked this devoted wife, with an air of not having said the same thing before : so irritating to an irritable maiden lady.

"Is that all the news he tells you?" I inquired ironically.

"He wants us to go home soon."

"Does he think you will make the weather cooler?" I inquired.

"My dear Dorothy, why do you always sneer at everything George says?" exclaimed Margaret mildly indignant.

"My dear, George can take care of himself, and in any case I consider it my duty as well as my privilege to point out his faults"

"He has not any," put in Margaret.

"Nonsense, for is he not my godson? and if some day I arrive at hating him,"

"Oh!" groaned Margaret.

"I shall only be following the dictates of kind-hearted logical humanity, for is he not mine heir?"

"Mammie, Auntie Dottie, dood night bofe! Kirkie says I must do to bed," said little

Hilda rushing into the room with her hair flying round her head like a golden glory, and her cheeks the colour of a blush rose. "There is such a nice 'ickle gal in the house an' she is much smaller 'an me, an' she likes diggin' in the sands an' she has a spade an' a wheelbarrow. I haven't dot a wheelbarrow," with a shy glance in my direction.

"*Hilda*," said Margaret severely. The blush rose cheeks grew crimson, and the big brown eyes filled with tears.

My love for Hilda is the one soft spot in my nature, for I am a rugged cynical old woman. I longed to take my darling up in my arms and carry her off then and there to the nearest town in search of a wheelbarrow, but Hilda and I are in great awe of Margaret on certain occasions.

"Well, darling, what is the little girl's name?" I inquired, anxious to relieve the child's confusion.

"Renée, yes, 'at is her name an' she speaks French so much better 'an I do, isn't it funny when she's such a 'ickle gal?"

"Renée!" I repeated thoughtfully, "it is strange! what is her other name, Hilda?"

"She hasn't no other name," said the child, "she is on'y 'ickle Renée."

"It is a very common French name," remarked Margaret.

"Yes, I suppose so," I answered absently, but my thoughts travelled back to a fair southern city, and a soft, spring flower-scented night, and a little lonely chapel amidst grey olive groves, and dark green cypress, and the drip drip of rain on the roof, and lying in his rude wooden coffin another René, whom I had known and liked and upon whose calm white features Death had set his seal, and

Little Hilda's ringing laugh brought me back to Venlettes and the reality with a start.

"Dood night, Mammie dear, and dear Auntie Dottie, I love 'ickle Renée I do," and kissing us both Hilda ran off to her nurse.

"Little Renée," I repeated under my breath.

"Dorothy," said Margaret prosaically, "re-

member I will not allow you to give Hilda a wheelbarrow."

"Did I say that I was going to give her one?" I inquired in an injured voice.

"No, but I am perfectly aware that you always do give her everything she asks for, and she is being completely spoilt."

"She did not ask!" I protested.

"Well she *hinted*, which is infinitely worse."

"Margaret, you are like the princess from whose lips dropped pearls and diamonds whenever she spoke; nevertheless I suppose you will allow me to buy a wheelbarrow for myself? and if occasionally when I am not using it, I lend it to your daughter, you can scarcely take exception to such a trifling act of civility on my part."

So saying, I discreetly retired to my own room.

For the next few days we saw nothing of the French family, and in the meantime I received a letter, summoning me to Paris, where I should have to remain for at least a fortnight, if not longer.

I promised Margaret to return to Venlettes and spend the last week with her before our departure for England. I was detained in Paris longer than I expected, and when I reached Venlettes, Margaret was beginning to prepare for our journey, but as I required rest, we agreed to remain a few days longer, and thus I saw the Tragedy played out.

.

“I have heard such a sad story since you left,” said Margaret, the first evening of my arrival. “How much sorrow there is wherever one goes! how much unmerited suffering! and strangely enough it always seems to fall upon those who are the least able to bear it.”

“Margaret moralising! It must indeed be something unusual!” I said smiling.

“Don’t laugh, Dorothy. You will not when you hear what I am going to tell you. Do you know that photograph?” she asked, holding out a little purple velvet case.

I opened it, and found that it contained a coloured photograph of Valérie Baremo, precisely the same as one I had in my own

possession, and which I always kept under lock and key.

"Certainly, I know it," I said looking inquiringly at Margaret.

"The original is in this house at this moment," she answered.

"Do you mean the Marchessa Baremo?"

"Yes, and her mother, Madame de Mirecourt, is with her."

"Then they are the people whom we saw arrive that evening?"

"Yes."

"And is Hilda's little René the child of Madame Baremo?"

"Yes, born prematurely after his death, and the poor mother has been hopelessly mad ever since—though she is gentle and tractable as a rule."

"Poor Valérie!" I exclaimed.

"It is the most touching story I ever heard, but how different from Sister Eldreda's!" said Margaret.

"Exactly, just the shadow of a foundation and that is all."

"Have you seen her?" I asked, after a moment's silence.

"Yes, nearly every day since you left. She is very lovely, and at first you would not believe she was mad, her expression is so sweet and gentle, but there is something odd about her eyes, you know how large they are, and they have a peculiar startled expression, as if they were looking at something hidden from every one else—do you understand what I mean?"

"Yes, they were always wistful in repose, but that wild look came into them when she first saw her husband lying in his coffin."

"And of course there was no intrigue between herself and some man, whose name by the way Sister Eldreda had never heard, for I recollect asking her?"

"None at all; she was devoted to her husband and he to her; though I am quite willing to allow that affection between married people is not the prevailing characteristic of the age."

“Why did he commit suicide, do you suppose?”

“He was hot-tempered, and maddened by his losses at play; and in my opinion Madame de Mirecourt was by no mean free from blame; she wrote a most injudicious letter, and though of course she could not possibly have foreseen the result, she must have known that her reproaches would sting to the quick a proud man like her son-in-law; more especially as he, of course, understood the entire justice of all she said.”

“She has bitterly repented, poor thing,” said Margaret. “What made her mention the subject to an utter stranger like yourself?”

“After you left, we used to meet very often in our walks, and the children brought us together, and one thing led to another; and one day I mentioned your name, which she remembered at once, and so by degrees I heard the whole story.”

“Did Madame de Mirecourt ever tell you why she wrote that unfortunate letter to her son-in-law?”

“Yes, she received three anonymous letters, bearing the Nice post-mark, on the subject of his gambling propensities and neglect of her daughter. She paid no attention to the first or second; but the very day the third letter arrived, a friend who had been staying at Nice happened to call, and he admitted, though unwillingly, that M. Baremo was playing high at the Clubs and Monte Carlo; and upon that she wrote to him.”

“She had better have left it alone.”

“She is fully aware of that herself now, because for a long time Madame Baremo could not endure the sight of her mother, and seems even now at times to dislike her. Poor Madame de Mirecourt was unable to account for it, until one day she found amongst her daughter’s papers, her own letter to M. Baremo and one from him to his wife—the last he ever wrote, and from the tone of it, he evidently believed his wife had written to her mother to accuse him.”

“Precisely, and now you can appreciate how all these unfortunate misunderstandings

added to the bitterness of Madame Baremo's grief, and ended by destroying her reason."

"Madame de Mirecourt is very anxious to know you; she wants to thank you for all your kindness to her daughter during that unhappy time."

"It is not at all necessary; but I should like to see poor Valérie again. I suppose she will not know me?"


"I imagine not. She seldom takes any notice of her mother, and does not care in the slightest degree for her child."

"I *am* surprised," said Margaret, after a long silence, "that a really conscientious woman like Sister Eldreda should wilfully spread abroad a story she must have known to be false."

"When you get to my age, you will be surprised at nothing," I answered.

"Dorothy, how cynical you are! remarkably so for a woman! Do you believe that there are such things in existence amongst men and women, as singleness of purpose, honesty, and sincerity?"

"Amongst men—yes—perhaps occasionally," I replied doubtfully. "Amongst women of a certain class, rarely or never," I continued briskly. "I don't believe such a being exists as a guileless woman after sixteen; and perhaps that is putting it rather late now-a-days! Of course they all pass muster as excellent, fascinating creatures, until they are tempted by the peculiar form of temptation they can least resist, no matter what it is! After giving way to it—they all do that of course—but after being found out, some few repent—one in a thousand—the rest make satisfactory excuses for their own peccadilloes, and spend the rest of their lives in picking holes in the reputations of other women. They mostly develop a taste for nursing the sick, which enables them to perform the graceful task of female detectives, by putting them in possession of the secrets of the relatives and friends of those they nurse. To make their calling legitimate, and themselves conspicuous, they wear a big cross, attached to their waists by a rope, and call themselves Sisters of MERCY."



"But there *are* such good women among them," said Margaret earnestly.

"Undoubtedly," I answered, "as there are exceptions to every rule—but as my experience has lain entirely amongst the bad ones, it has impressed me with the conviction that the Anglican Communities of Ritualistic women are the scourge of the nineteenth century."

"Dorothy, you are not in earnest? I know you are not so cynical as you pretend to be," pleaded Margaret.

"My dear, one begins life by believing in everybody—and one ends it by believing in nobody, least of all in oneself," I answered sardonically.

CRAS LUX.

AND thus, at the end of three years, I met Valérie Baremo again.

She did not seem to recognise me, though occasionally I fancied that the sight of me awoke certain recollections, for which she could not account. Often, indeed, she was so rational that it was difficult to believe in the total loss of her reason.

It was our last evening at Venlettes. Hilda and little Renée, accompanied by the German nurse and Maria, the old French *gouvernante*, had gone early in the morning to spend the day with some children at a neighbouring *Château*.

It was a close, sultry evening ; heavy, black clouds were gathering round the horizon, and now and again a distant rumbling of thunder

broke the intense silence that seemed to have fallen on every living thing.

We were all sitting on the beach awaiting the arrival of the children.

Madame Baremo, always more or less affected by any change in the weather, became exceedingly restless, and some one proposed that we should walk to a certain point along the shore, where, on account of an opening in the surrounding hills, there was generally a certain amount of freshness in the air.

We strolled slowly along the sands for a considerable distance, and then sat down to rest on some rocks, too much overcome by the sultriness of the air to go any further. It began to grow very dark, and the rumbling of the thunder became more and more distinct.

"I am sure there will be a heavy storm before morning," said Margaret, "the clouds are so black over the sea;" and as she spoke, a vivid flash of lightning lit up the sky, followed almost immediately by a loud clap of thunder.

"I hope, Hilda, the children are safe," said

the anxious mother, looking in the direction of the hotel, which was nearly a mile off.

"The storms come up so suddenly at this time of year, and thunder always makes my daughter—nervous," said Madame de Mirecourt. "I think we had better return to the inn."

We all rose, but Madame Baremo separated herself from the rest of the party, and began to walk to and fro, in a feverish, excited manner, muttering to herself the while.

Some heavy drops of rain fell, a light breeze sprang up, and then died away again, leaving the atmosphere more than ever oppressive.

"Valérie, shall we go home, my child?" said Madame de Mirecourt, approaching her daughter.

The girl made no answer, only her wild, excited eyes grew more and more excited as she walked backwards and forwards faster and faster, twisting her hands together like one in the utmost extremity of bodily pain.

"Valérie, my dear, come home," entreated

Madame de Mirecourt, but Valérie did not seem to hear.

"The weather always affects my daughter in such an extraordinary way," repeated Madame de Mirecourt nervously.

"I wish I had not sent Maria away to-day, she always manages Valérie better than I do."

Heavy drops of rain continued to fall, as the storm came slowly up, and Valérie stopped suddenly, and began to stroke her wet sleeves and dress, looking wistfully at us as we approached.

"He went away in the rain," she said, "will the rain bring him back again? You know I have been waiting for him a long time, but when the rain comes down and wets my face and hair like his, I shall be ready to go to him, but not till then, not till then," she sobbed, turning away wearily, and beginning to walk up and down, wringing her hands and moaning like a tired child.

"We are so far from home, and I am so anxious about Hilda," said Margaret in an under tone, while Madame de Mirecourt vainly


endeavoured to persuade her daughter to listen to her entreaties to return. "I am sure there will be a fearful storm before long: oh, my poor Hilda!"

"Return in all haste to the inn, and send the servants with shawls to meet us, most especially Maria. I will remain, of course, with Madame de Mirecourt."

"Is it not selfish to leave you?"

I reassured Margaret on that score, and she accepted my suggestion with the greatest alacrity, and was soon out of sight.

At this moment Valérie came to my side, and after standing by me for a second without speaking, sank down upon the wet sand with a piteous sigh, covering her face with her hands. We were drenched with the rain, and the storm increased in violence every instant, the lightning flashing and the thunder pealing almost simultaneously, whilst the incoming tide, and the noise of the heavy waves breaking on the shore, added to the awfulness of the scene, but Valérie sat staring straight before her or muttering to herself, as heedless of



what was taking place as if she was in her own room.

“See my darling,” said her mother bending over her and gently taking her arm, “see how dark it is growing, will you not try to walk home? Come my child?”

But Valérie sprang to her feet, and shaking off her mother’s hand, said in a voice which rang through one in its intense sadness.

“Do not touch me! oh, do not touch me! René used to take my arm and walk with me under the olive trees in the bright spring days at Monaco. Hark! I can hear the Turbie bells stealing down through the trees, but the violets we gathered are all withered and dead, and there are no more orange flowers, only the wind and the rain that took my René away, and he will never, never walk with me again, never again. You think I am mad, no, no, no,” she shrieked, “a hundred times no! If I were mad I should not suffer, my heart would not sicken and faint under this intolerable pain, from morning till night, and from night till morning, if I were mad, as you say!

My God, let me see René again, only once again for one short hour!"

Valérie falling on her knees and raising her clasped hands in piteous entreaty.

"He wants to come to me, he wants to come, and you will not let him. There is no help, no pity either in heaven or on earth, it is all one black hideous dream. You have taken him away where he cannot hear me. René, oh my René!" she shrieked above the roaring of the surf, and the crashing of the thunder.

We stood beside the unhappy girl, trembling and awe-stricken, too much absorbed in her terrible ravings to heed the awful storm that raged around us.

It was useless to speak to her, the madness must have its way, and all we could do was to stand by and listen.

Presently she began again raising her ashen face towards the pitch black sky above us. "There is no hope for him through all eternity! He who was so loving, so full of compassion for the sorrows of others will remain in torture

through all eternity, and God looks on, and is still. You think I don't know how he died ! They think I don't know how he did," she said turning to me with wild appealing eyes. "Not know, I, his own wife ? I will tell you, for you do not know. He killed himself. He thought the loss of the money would grieve me. I, who would have given him my life to save him from a moment's pain ! but she drove him mad—she—my mother, she loved the money, not René, and so he died all alone in the wind and the rain, one spring night at Monaco."

"Valérie, Valérie, my poor child, you do not know what you are saying," moaned her unhappy mother.

"I—know—what I am saying," repeated Valérie, jerking the words out with a sort of sob, "do I know what I am saying ?" and turning away she walked slowly toward the sea.

We followed her, guided by the flashing of the lightning, for the night had gathered round and the storm made it unnaturally dark.

She stopped short—already she was so near

the breaking waves that the spray enveloped her like a white mist, and turning impatiently said,

“Why do you follow me everywhere, pursue me like a poor hunted dog? I have done nothing to deserve it, unless it is a crime to be unhappy; then indeed I am the most guilty creature on the good God’s miserable earth!”

“My poor poor child,” moaned Madame de Mirecourt. “Oh, Miss Greville, follow her, keep near her, the sight of me only irritates her. What are we to do alone in this fearful storm?”

I stepped hastily forward and laying firm hold of Valérie’s arm said, in as steady a voice as I could command, “Come home at once, Madame Baremo, I insist upon it, come at once.”

Valérie bent down and looked at me with her beautiful piteous eyes. “You think I am mad,” she said wonderingly. “No I am not mad, but I will explain to you, and then you will help me to escape from these people. They have taken my husband away, he went

away in the rain, and some day it will bring him back again, but not yet, they say, and I cannot live without him, do you understand? I cannot live without him, and when they are not looking I try to find him, I try—try—but they always follow me, and he will not come while they are watching, will you help me, please, will you help me, for my heart aches to see him, oh, so badly," she said breaking into a wailing sob like a little child.

"My dear," I said half-crying myself, "it is too late to-night, come home, and you shall tell me all about it to-morrow."

"Ah, you are like the others, like the others, but I have no home, no home! René took it away with him when he left me, and I have never found another."

Then all at once she held out her hand, as if to take leave of an every day acquaintance. "Good-bye," she said, "my husband is waiting for me to go home. I cannot stay any longer, or it will be too dark to see the way."

Before I had time to answer, Valérie stepped out of my sight into the gloom.

“Madame de Mirecourt !” I called in agony, “come at once, she is walking towards the Point, and the tide is coming in fast—she will be drowned if she passes it, for the sea comes in close up to the cliffs.”

On we went, stumbling over sunken rocks, slippery with the sea-weed—side-by-side we hurried, a brighter flash of lightning every now and then showing us Valérie’s tall slight figure far ahead, swiftly walking in the direction of the fatal point. Breathless and terror-stricken we strove to call, but our voices were drowned by the crashing of the waves, as they broke in swift succession on the shore. Madame de Mirecourt’s strength gave way, and she sank down panting and exhausted ; but I went on, my nerves strung to their utmost tension, striving with all my failing strength to overtake the poor mad girl hurry-ing to her doom. We were very near the point, but I had gained on Valérie—she was walking less swiftly. Oh, merciful heaven, save her ! I could almost touch her—I tried to grasp her dress, but it slipped from my

hand. A vivid flash of lightning illumined land and sea, showing the gleaming white cliffs within five yards of us.

The receding waves left the sand bare, as the water ran back with a hissing sound that froze the blood in my veins.

"Valérie, stop, for the love of heaven, stop!" I cried, my poor feeble voice trembling in the desperation of my terror. She stood on the wet glistening sand for one moment—it seemed an eternity to me—the next she had passed the point.

.
Then the thundering waves came rolling up, and broke with a mighty crash, throwing up their spray a hundred feet into the air.

.
I tried to speak—to call out in the greatness of my anguish—but a glare of light, blinding in its white intensity, scorched my eyes, a voice above as if the heavens were rent asunder, a death-like sensation of pain and faintness, and—I remember no more.

. ,

Many weeks after, when I was recovering from a long illness, Margaret told me how that fatal night ended.

On reaching the inn, she found the children at home, and she at once sent off old Maria to our assistance, accompanied by all the men belonging to the hotel, and some sailors, who were standing about watching the storm.

They overtook Madame Mirecourt, who told them in what direction to go.

They came up to us in time to see Valérie standing on the glistening, bare sand, under the cliffs ; she was washed off her feet, and dragged back by the retreating water into the sea, but the next wave threw her back upon the shore, and at the risk of their lives, the men plunged into the surf and rescued her.

She was carried back to the inn, in a state of insensibility, and medical assistance was obtained, but the injuries she had received were fatal.

She lingered until the next night, in a state of unconsciousness. Just before midnight, Madame de Mirecourt and Margaret, who were

watching by her bed-side, observed a change come over her. She opened her eyes, out of which the wild gleam of madness had completely disappeared.

She recognised her mother and smiled, trying to stretch out her hand.

"This is death, is it not, mother?" she whispered. "Good bye. I am not frightened, my mother; I am so glad—so glad to go."

Madame de Mirecourt bent over her dying child, and pressed a long kiss on the pure, white brow.

"*Ma mère,*" she whispered. "*Hier la nuit, aujourd'hui aurora, demain la jour—demain—la—jour,*" she murmured some words inaudibly, and Madame de Mirecourt, bending down, heard her whisper, "*Mon René,*" and in a few seconds she had ceased to breathe.

.
"And now about yourself, Dorthy," said Margaret, "when they brought you to the inn, I thought you were dead. You had been

struck by the lightning, and it was a miracle that you were not killed —— ”

“I don’t believe in miracles,” I interrupted crossly, “and I don’t wish to talk about myself. I was *not* killed, and there is nothing more to be said.”

.

And Valérie was taken back to the little Cemetery on the hill-side, near the fair southern town, hidden amidst the olive groves and cypress, and laid by her husband’s side under the violet-gemmed earth, and the sweet-scented cyclamen—and one spring evening, when the air was heavy with the scent of roses and orange-blossom, I stood by their graves, and read their names, and the dates of their deaths, and at the base of the gleaming, white cross, these three words are engraved—

Post umbram Lux.

